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CONFIRMATION

A Study in the Development of Sacramental Theology

CONFIRMATION

A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

*Presented to the Theological Faculty
of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth,
as a thesis for the Degree of Doctor*

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BY

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PREFACE.

EVEN those who are possessed of a mere superficial acquaintance with Sacramental Theology will have noticed what pains our Catholic Theologians have taken to provide an answer to the question : ' How did Christ institute the Sacraments ? ' They cannot, moreover, have failed to notice that the writers have sought for a solution along two different lines. Some prefer to regard the matter from an *a priori* standpoint and deduce ' what is ' from ' what ought to be. ' Others, questioning the premises, prefer to examine facts before they theorise. The conclusions of the two schools are, as might be suspected, as divergent as their methods.

Convinced that the historico-theological attitude is correct, the writer of the present essay turned his attention to the Sacrament of Confirmation to see if he could derive any light from its history : the essay is a presentation of the results of his investigations.

He finds that in apostolic times, and for centuries afterwards, the rite of Confirmation consisted of an imposition of hands with prayer. The lineal descendant of this rite is, he maintains, consignation with chrism together with the indicative form. He cannot sympathize much with those who see an imposition in the very act of unction : he thinks that the theory is a *deus ex machina* solution of a difficulty which rests on false assumptions.

The antiquity to which it lays claim does not lessen its improbability. It was begotten of difficulties, as it thrives in them.

The history of this sacramental rite is of exceptional interest; and the writer has found it none the less interesting because it has forced him, against his wishes almost, to the conclusion that Christ determined the matter and form of the Sacrament merely in a generic fashion, and left to his Church the power to make specific changes in the sacred rite.

M. O'D.

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Confirmation

A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

CHAPTER I.

CONFIRMATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE Catholic Church teaches that confirmation is one of the seven sacraments of the new law instituted by Jesus Christ. This doctrine has been formally defined by the Council of Trent in the first canon of the seventh session : " If anyone says that the sacraments of the new law have not all been instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, or that they are more or less than seven, namely, baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, order, and matrimony ; or even that anyone of these is not truly and properly a sacrament ; let him be anathema." Anathema notwithstanding, Protestants as a general rule deny the existence of any such sacrament ; and as, moreover, in these days the higher critics are sifting closely the pages of the New Testament and constantly putting forward new theories in accordance with their *a priori* assumptions, it will not be out of place in a short introductory chapter to examine the scriptural evidence on behalf of the Catholic position. Although a vast array of evidence, cited from the early Fathers, whose testimony has been echoed through all the succeeding generations, would afford more than ample proof of the doctrine, nevertheless we shall confine ourselves in the present chapter to an examination of the New Testament alone. That the early Fathers and their successors

speaking with no uncertain voice on this matter will be evident to the reader of the subsequent chapters.

When, as a result of St. Peter's preaching after the First Pentecost, large numbers were converted to the Christian faith in Jerusalem, the Jewish authorities became alarmed, and the first persecution of the infant Church began. As a result many Christians fled from Jerusalem and spread themselves through the neighbouring cities of Judaea and Samaria. Prominent among those who took flight was Philip the deacon, who sought refuge in the city of Samaria, and on his arrival there preached Christ to the inhabitants. So much did he confirm his preaching by miracles, that there was great joy in the city, and they were baptised, both men and women, into the name of Jesus Christ. At this point the following event is narrated by St. Luke: "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he was fallen on none of them; for they had only been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they imposed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that through the imposition of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying: "Give me also this power that on whomsoever I impose my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit." ¹ This passage is, and always has been, quoted by writers in support of the Catholic teaching on confirmation.

The first thing we notice in the passage is the fact that Philip, though a deacon and an evangelist, though he could baptise and perform miracles, was not qualified to initiate the Samaritans to the full extent in the Christian religion. We are told pointedly in the text that the

¹ Acts, viii, 14-20.

Samaritans had *only* been baptised ; clearly implying that something more was required for their full initiation, something which was distinct from baptism, but yet its complement. Moreover, their full initiation must have been a matter of serious importance, when the apostles, after a consultation in Jerusalem, considered it necessary to send two of their number to supply what was still lacking. And how was it supplied ? Peter and John, —who had been sent from Jerusalem,—first prayed for the baptised Samaritans, that they might receive the Holy Spirit ; and then imposed hands on the same when the Holy Spirit was received. Evidently the prayer was employed to define the end for which the imposition of hands was performed. Between the imposition of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit there is a most intimate causal relation. The gift is the effect of the imposition. This is borne out also by the fact that Simon saw it was *by the imposition of hands* that the Holy Spirit was imparted, and sought to purchase the power of bestowing the same gift in the same manner. From all of which we conclude that the imposition of hands which bestowed the Holy Spirit is a rite distinct from baptism, and that the power to perform the ceremony is not implied in the power to baptise. In the minister, in the rite itself, and in the effect, the two ceremonies are different.

One searches the narrative in vain for any foundation for the old-time Lutheran and Protestant contention that the apostles merely wished to make an offering of the baptised Samaritans to God ; or that their confirmation consisted merely in their instruction and examination and in their public profession of faith before the apostles. Such things are not mentioned by St. Luke.

Nor is there much more foundation for the modern contention, that the apostles came down from Jerusalem to ascertain for themselves the orthodoxy of the recent

converts, and to sanction the work of Philip, either by approving of the preaching of the Gospel to the Samaritans or by attaching them to the Palestinian community. The advocates of this theory point out that the apostles, being of Jewish sympathies, would naturally have a decided objection to the admission of the Samaritans, the hereditary enemies of the Jews, within the circle of the faithful. They cite the case of Cornelius, where it was by the descent of the Holy Spirit Peter recognised that the Gentiles should have a share in the Gospel. And so, they say, as his antipathy to the Samaritans was no less than to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit had to come down again before he would sanction the admission of the Samaritans.

The two cases are not parallel. In the case of Cornelius the descent of the Holy Spirit was sudden and unexpected and took place before baptism. It was the expression of God's will that the Gentiles should be immediately received into the Church. This was not a normal case. In that of the Samaritans, miracles had already been worked in their regard ; they had already been converted and baptised ; and there is question of the imposition of hands producing its effect in the ordinary manner. Moreover, though St. Luke points out clearly that it was God Himself who bestowed the Holy Spirit on Cornelius, to authorise the baptism and reception of the Gentiles into the Church, he does not give the faintest indication that any such purpose was present in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the Samaritans by the imposition of the apostles' hands. There is nothing sudden or unexpected in this case ; the apostles intervened to perform an ordinary rite which produces its normal effect, and there is no question in the narrative of their intervention being required as a necessary sanction or ratification of the conversion of the Samaritans, nor of its having for its object the attachment of these to the

Palestinian community. Such theories do more credit to the brilliant imaginations of their exponents than to their impartial study of history.

Not less interesting is the account of the ceremonies of Christian initiation briefly outlined by St. Luke in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts: "But it came to pass while Apollo was at Corinth that Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus and found certain disciples. And he said to them: Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? But they said to him: We did not so much as hear whether there be a Holy Spirit. And he said: Unto what then were you baptised? They said: Unto the baptism of John. But Paul said: John indeed baptised with the baptism of penance, saying to the people, that they should believe in him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus. When they heard these things, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied." ¹

From an examination of this passage it would appear that Paul at first considered that these Ephesian disciples had been already baptised; and, being under this impression, is anxious to know if they had received the Holy Spirit. The form of his question indicates that he refers to some definite bestowal of the Holy Spirit in past time; implying, as his subsequent action points out, that he contemplates some visible ceremony by which the Holy Spirit was given. The question implies, moreover, that the giving of the Holy Spirit was an ordinary occurrence in the Church. When they assured him that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit, he immediately asks them: "Unto what then were you baptised?" indicating, either that Christian baptism

¹ Acts, xix, 1-6.

was impossible without mention of the Holy Spirit, or that it was usually accompanied by a ceremony which imparted Him. When he learned that they had been baptised only with John's baptism, Paul expounds to them the relation between the baptism of John and that of Jesus; and, having explained the superiority of the latter, "they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." Here, also, as in the case of the Samaritans, there is a two-fold ceremony of initiation: baptism, and its complement, the imposition of hands. That the latter factor is important we can conclude from the solicitude of the apostle's first question to the disciples. Besides, although we are not told who administered the baptism, St. Luke is careful to note that it was St. Paul who imposed hands. This implies that some special power was required for the latter ceremony. Hence from this passage also we may conclude that the ceremony of the imposition of hands is different from that of baptism, in its minister, in the rite itself, and in its effect.

Having established the existence of two distinct rites of initiation at the earliest age; and having, moreover, established the connection between the rite of imposition of hands and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, we now come to examine the nature of the grace which is contained in this bestowal. Is it something peculiar, which is imparted to the Samaritans and Ephesians alone; or have we any example of a similar grace conferred on other Christians? Is it distinct from the effect of baptism; and if so, is it to be identified with the external gifts of charisms? If it is not to be confounded with these, in what then does its special characteristic consist? To answer these questions, let us confine our attention to the Third Gospel and the Acts, which are but one

uninterrupted account of the action of the Holy Spirit on Christ and on the early Christians.

During his public life Christ had promised that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to all who ask him,¹ and that this Holy Spirit would teach his disciples what to answer in the moment of need, when, as Christian confessors, they would be arraigned before the synagogues and the magistrates and the powers.² His very last command to the apostles before his ascension was to the effect that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the fulfilment of the Father's promise : " For John indeed baptised with water, but you shall be baptised in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." ³ This baptism in the Holy Spirit was to endow them with power from on high and to prepare them for their missionary labours : " You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria and even unto the end of the earth." ⁴ It is reasonable to conceive this promise, though made only to the apostles, as being directed through them to the whole Christian body, for it was not confined to them in its fulfilment, nor was it they alone who would have to undergo the hardships of bearing witness to the truth. Besides, St. Peter ⁵ on two occasions implies that the promise is universal.

At length, after some days of anxious expectation, that of Pentecost arrived and the promise was fulfilled. The apostles and brethren in Jerusalem, in number about one hundred and twenty, were all assembled together in the same place : " And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other tongues, according as the Spirit gave them to utter." ⁶ The crowd gathered round them in astonishment, and St. Peter

¹ Luke, xi, 13.

⁴ Acts, i, 8.

² Ib., xii, 8-12.

⁵ Ib., ii, 17-18 ; xi, 16.

³ Acts, i, 5.

⁶ Acts, ii, 4.

showed how the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled, when the gift of the Spirit was no longer confined to a few chosen servants of God but was to be extended to all God's people. It was Jesus who, having been raised to his seat at God's right hand, had asked the Father and had poured forth the Holy Spirit according to his promise. But the outpouring of the Spirit is not altogether confined to those who had already received it; it is a gift which all Peter's audience may receive on certain conditions: "Do penance, and let each one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise and to your children and to all who are afar, as many as the Lord our God shall call.¹ Later on St. Peter² assures us that the Holy Spirit is given to all who obey. He and St. John, as we have seen, go down from Jerusalem and give the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans by an imposition of hands; Paul bestows the same gift on the Ephesian disciples; and St. Luke³ informs us that Paul and Barnabas departed from Antioch leaving the Gentile disciples full of the Holy Spirit. The grace of the descent of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius before baptism is extraordinary, but it had its own special purpose.

The gift, then, of the Holy Spirit would seem to be a grace which is not reserved to a few; it is to be extended to all the faithful. But is there question of the same grace in all these cases? In that of the Samaritans, as also that of the Ephesians, there can be no doubt. It is the gift, the coming, the descent, the reception of the Holy Spirit. St. Luke, moreover, does not distinguish between the grace imparted to these and that imparted to Cornelius, who also obtains the gift, the reception, the descent of the Holy Spirit. In addition, St. Peter identifies in several places the gift given to Cornelius

¹ *Ib.*, ii, 38, 39.

² *Ib.*, v, 32.

³ *Ib.*, xiii, 52.

with that which was received at Pentecost : " But when I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them *as on us* at the beginning."¹ " Giving them the Spirit *as to us*, and he made no difference between them and us."² Cornelius is thus a link between the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit and the outpouring accorded to the Samaritans and Ephesians. It would seem, then, that the grace given to the latter was similar to that given to the apostles and the brethren at Pentecost, as also to that which Peter promised to all on certain conditions. It is a grace which is to be universal in the Christian dispensation.

Is it distinct from the grace which is given in baptism ? There is a clear distinction expressed between the effect of both rites, as far as the Samaritans and the Ephesians are concerned. Philip baptised the Samaritans in the ordinary manner, and yet they did not obtain the Holy Spirit. Nor is there in the narrative any indication that it is owing to some defect in their baptism this effect was not produced ; on the contrary, the Acts lead us to understand that Philip did well when he baptised the Ethiopian eunuch. The defect therefore did not lie in him. Nor does it seem to reside in the Samaritans, for they *believed* previous to their baptism. Peter and John did not intervene because of any invalidity in their baptism ; they intervened to perform another ceremony which was not within the competency of Philip, a ceremony which had an effect different from that of baptism. They imposed hands and the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. A similar distinction, of ceremony and effect, is noticeable in the account of the initiation of the Ephesian disciples by St. Paul. Their baptism was administered probably by ministers other than Paul, and their baptism had its ordinary effect ; yet, when it was completed, Paul imposed hands on

¹ Acts, xi, 15.

² Ib., xv, 8, 9.

those who had received it, and thus imparted to them the Holy Spirit.

There are traces of a like distinction in other passages of St. Luke. The baptism of Christ by John was a type of Christian baptism ; and it is when Jesus has been baptised and gone up out of the water the Holy Spirit ¹ descends on him in corporal form. In announcing the advent and the wonderful works of Jesus, the Baptist gives vent to a curious expression which has been a puzzle to commentators : " I indeed baptise you with water . . . but he shall baptise you in the Holy Spirit and fire." ² This would seem, at first sight, to imply a comparison between the baptism of John and that of Jesus, to the advantage of the latter, whose superiority is represented as being due to the fact that it alone can bestow the Holy Spirit. But Luke never tells us that Jesus during his life on earth gave the Holy Spirit in this manner ; and many see in this text an allusion to the gift of Pentecost, when, according to Christ's promise, the apostles and the brethren were washed in the Holy Spirit. The agreement in language between the words of John and the promise of Christ in the first chapter of the Acts ³ is very striking. At Pentecost there is no question of the apostles receiving ordinary baptism ; while it would seem, as many commentators hold, that they received the grace of confirmation by the direct intervention of God without the visible sacrament. This implies that the grace or effect of the two sacraments is distinct.

Peter also in his speech to the multitude insinuates this distinction : " Do penance, and let each of you be baptised in the name of Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Luke, iii, 21, 22 ; compare the parallel passages in the other two synoptics, especially, Mark, i, 10.

² Luke, iii, 16.

³ Acts, i, 5.

For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all who are afar, as many as the Lord our God shall call."¹ Does Peter wish to say that this gift is received in baptism, or is it a gift which is conferred after baptism? Both opinions have been maintained; but the latter is more probable in the light of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and considering what we know of the initiation of the Samaritans and the Ephesians. Peter, as we are aware, finds the explanation of the gift of Pentecost in the prophecy of Joel, and he invokes the same prophecy to prove that the gift is to be universal. If then the grace of Pentecost is equivalent to the effect of confirmation, and if this effect is distinct from that of baptism, it would seem that the gift of the Holy Spirit, which Peter promises, is to be obtained by a different ceremony from baptism. Nor is it any objection to this interpretation that St. Luke in the following verse mentions only baptism as being administered to the converts; for he is gliding along rapidly, and his readers would sufficiently understand that a further ceremony was performed, namely, an imposition of hands to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The grace of baptism, then, is different from the effect of the Holy Spirit, but may it not be that this is an external charism, such as was received at Pentecost, and not an internal grace such as Catholic theology ascribes to confirmation. We do not think so. The reception of the Holy Spirit by the Ephesian disciples was accompanied by the charisms of tongues and of prophecy; and something similar must have occurred at the reception by the Samaritans; for, although there is no express mention of charisms in their case, yet, from the fact that Simon *saw* that the Holy Spirit was given by the imposition of hands, we can infer that the presence of the Spirit must have been manifested in some visible

¹ Acts, ii, 38.

manner. The two accounts insinuate that the charism is the result or accidental effect of the interior gift of the Spirit, but they do not clearly express this distinction. The reason is plain. St. Luke was the historian of the infant Church; and the inner life of the individual, its mental experiences and numerous transformations,—things which so readily find a place in a spiritual autobiography,—strike the historian less forcibly, and he will describe them in fewer words. On the other hand, for one tracing the origin, progress, and extension of Christianity, the external phenomena, and especially the *charismata* which played such a large part as a means of propagation, will have an unique importance. Doubtless it was the bestowal of these *charismata* which stirred the Jewish and the pagan mind to its depths, and which was largely responsible for the rapid spread of the Gospel. Such gifts excited the wonder of the unbeliever without and strengthened the faith of the believer within; and they usually accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit. It had been so in Jerusalem, at Pentecost; it was so in Samaria and Ephesus; it was so even in the case of Cornelius.

But such gifts are to be distinguished from the essential gift of the Holy Spirit; they follow from it as an effect and are not to be identified with it. It was as a result of their being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the brethren spoke in tongues: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other tongues."¹ Nor are the *charismata* the only effect of the gift of the Spirit. It was to endow the apostles with power to render witness to Jesus Christ even to the end of the earth; Peter was full of the Holy Spirit when he spoke up so fearlessly to the Jewish authorities. The *charismata* are not even mentioned on some occasions when the Spirit was bestowed. We

¹ Acts, ii. 4.

are not told that any of the three thousand whom St. Peter converted by his first sermon received any charism, although there can be no doubt that they received the Holy Spirit according to Peter's promise ; and, as we have seen, there is no express mention of any charism when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Holy Spirit, then, is an invisible interior gift, which is imparted to the soul of each individual ; and this grace, though independent of the *charismata*, is sometimes accompanied by such visible manifestations. Speaking of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, a modern writer has summed up the situation pretty well : " It is in this great change of mental and spiritual attitude, rather than in the external signs of wind and fire, or in strange powers of utterance, that we recognise the supreme miracle of the day of Pentecost." ¹

What, then, is the purpose of the grace of the Spirit ; or in what does its special characteristic consist ? The answer can be gleaned from what we have already seen. The Father was to give the Spirit to the disciples, to enable them to bear testimony to the name of Jesus, and to instruct them how to answer in their hour of peril. They would be endowed with power from on high, whereby they would be fortified for their arduous mission of being the witnesses of Jesus even to the end of the earth. The promise was fulfilled. The apostles received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ; their intellects were enlightened, their wills were strengthened, and these ignorant men were at once transformed into the most intelligent and intrepid band of missionaries the world has ever known. Under the influence of the Spirit Peter immediately preaches Christ to the astonished multitude ; and so full is he of the Holy Spirit that the Jewish authorities are amazed at the constancy and the wonderful knowledge which he displays in their presence. Nor was the

¹ Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, Chap. v, p. 77.

influence of the Spirit confined to Peter and the other apostles ; for we are told that, when the Christian assembly after the arraignment and release of Peter and John prayed to the Lord to deliver them from the threats of the Jews, so that they should speak the word of God with all confidence, as a response to their prayer, " They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God *with confidence*." ¹ Stephen also is full of the Holy Spirit when he renders the testimony which leads to his martyrdom.

From all this we conclude that the grace of the Holy Spirit is to be universal in the Church of God ; it is distinct from the effects of baptism ; it confers an interior gift which illuminates and strengthens the spiritual life of the individual ; it is accompanied by actual graces, either of extraordinary charisms or of the ordinary kind whereby the individual is enabled to profess the Christian faith with wisdom and with fortitude in whatever circumstances he may be placed.

But someone will say, is not the Holy Spirit given in baptism, and was he not given to the souls of the just in the Old Testament ? There can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit is, and was, so given, but yet there is a technical sense in which he is not given even now. According to St. John, the gift of the Holy Spirit is connected in some way with the glorification of Jesus : " For as yet the Spirit was not given because Jesus was not yet glorified." ² Evidently the meaning is that the Spirit was not given in the technical sense, of being given so abundantly and manifestly and for the special purpose for which he is bestowed at Pentecost and afterwards. It was in this technical sense that St. Cyprian and the Fathers denied that the Holy Spirit was imparted at baptism.

If we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find a

¹ Acts iv, 31.

² John, vii, 39.

passage which has been applied by many of the Fathers to the sacrament of confirmation. "Wherefore, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect, not laying again the foundation of penance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms and of imposition of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."¹ The combination of the imposition of hands with baptism shows that the reference is to the same rite of initiation by which the Holy Spirit was imparted to the Samaritans and Ephesians. Nor can it be objected that, since *baptisms*, not baptism, are mentioned, there is question of the various lustrations which, as the author informs ² us, were practised commonly by the Jews. Such lustrations were not the word of the beginning of Christ; and the plural number is sufficiently explained if it is referred either to the many persons who were baptised or to the different methods of conferring Christian baptism at the period. The rite of the imposition of hands is so well known that no further description is deemed necessary. The fact of its being put forward as one of the first principles of Christianity, ranked side by side with such fundamental truths as baptism, the resurrection, and the judgment, affords sufficient proof of the importance and universality of this rite in the early Christian communities. It was no vain or trivial ceremony; no mere examination of the baptised in Christian doctrine; no mere public renewal of the profession of faith made at baptism. It was an imposition of hands, to confer the Holy Spirit. Nor was this ceremony anything peculiar, which was performed in the case of the Samaritans and Ephesians alone; for both the *Acts* and the *Epistle to the Hebrews* lead us to believe that what was done to them was only an example of what was done generally in the Church.

¹ Heb., vi, 1 & 2.² Heb., ix, 10.

Do we gather anything further from the theology of St. Paul? If St. Luke is confined, by the scope of his inquiry, to the external effects which the presence of the Holy Spirit produced upon the Church and the world, St. Paul is hampered by no such limitations. The presence of the Holy Spirit and his operation in the soul of each individual member of the Church engage his attention quite as much as his operation in the whole Body of Christ. It is true, indeed, that he nowhere expressly mentions the imposition of hands, as imparting the Holy Spirit in confirmation; but from his question to the disciples at Ephesus and his subsequent action, as recorded by St. Luke, we can infer that he was accustomed to administer to converts a rite which produced this effect. There is one objection to this, namely, that St. Paul connects the bestowal of the Holy Spirit with baptism and not with the imposition of hands: "According to his mercy, he saved us by the laver of regeneration and of renewal of the Holy Spirit. Whom he had poured forth on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."¹ This text can be read in two ways, either "by a laver of regeneration and by a renewal of the Holy Spirit"; or "by a laver of regeneration and of renewal of the Holy Spirit"; and some who take the first reading say that there is an allusion to two distinct rites in the text. The second reading is critically the better; and on this view the communication of the Holy Spirit seems to be attributed to baptism. But even if we allow this, there is nothing inconsistent with St. Luke; for the Holy Spirit can be given in both sacraments with different effects. It would yet remain true that the Holy Spirit,—in the sense of the plenitude of the Spirit,—was not conferred by baptism. If, however, the latter part of the text refers to the same communication of the Holy Spirit, it would seem to be-

¹ Titus, iii, 5. 6.

against this interpretation. It may be possible that St. Paul refers to the whole rite of initiation ; which consisted of the two acts, though he makes express mention of baptism alone. He could do this, as the two were always administered together at that time, and as baptism was the more important. There is some foundation for this view when we consider the account given by St. Luke of the confirmation of the Samaritans, as well as the question which St. Paul put to the Ephesians.

Before we pass from the New Testament, there are one or two points which yet remain for discussion. Every sacrament has a sensible sign which consists of two elements ; the matter, which is in itself indeterminate and could be utilised for various purposes ; and the form, whereby the matter is determined to a specific end. The mere washing with water is not the sensible sign of the sacrament of baptism ; it must be accompanied by the Trinitarian form, to determine its signification and to define the exact purpose for which the washing takes place. Have we any evidence in Scripture that the imposition of hands was accompanied by an appropriate form ? The exact words of such a form are nowhere given. We are not told that St. Paul made use of any words when he imposed hands on the Ephesian disciples. Peter and John *prayed* for the Samaritans, that they might receive the Holy Spirit ; but it is difficult to decide whether this prayer was an invocation of the Holy Spirit previous to confirmation proper, or whether it was united with the imposition of hands, to produce the sacramental effect. It seems, indeed, to define the end for which the imposition of hands takes place, and thus to refer to the form of confirmation, but it is not altogether impossible that it may have been a prayer which was preparatory to the imposition of hands, rather than its accompaniment. Even if St. Luke does not mention the form, we need not be surprised at his silence ; for

he very often compresses his narrative, and Christian tradition will supply any omissions. An argument from the silence of an author is always precarious, and this is true of none more so than St. Luke who tells of several baptisms, without mentioning any form, though it was certainly employed. At the same time, it is far more probable that the prayer uttered by Peter and John was the real form of confirmation, though its exact words are not given by St. Luke.

The question of the divine institution of the sacrament of confirmation yet remains. Though this subject would be much better discussed in the light of subsequent historical developments, it is necessary to touch it briefly from the scriptural point of view. The fact of the institution of all the sacraments by our Lord Jesus Christ has been defined by the Council of Trent.¹ How exactly he instituted them,—whether mediately or immediately,—was not explicitly defined; and many theologians, both before and after the Council, maintained the theory of mediate institution. Almost all admitted that this opinion was compatible with the teaching of Trent. In later days this view has almost entirely disappeared, and it is now the general teaching of theologians that confirmation, with the other sacraments, was immediately instituted by our Lord. But when we hold the immediate institution, we do not necessarily imply that Christ determined the individual matter and form of confirmation; for generic determination of both is not inconsistent with immediate institution. Christ could have promised that he would give a certain amount and quality of grace; saying that an external rite must be employed, but leaving to the apostles and the Church to determine the exact nature of the rite whereby this effect was to be produced. He would thus have deter-

¹ Sess. vii, De Sac. in genere, can. i. For the text of the canon, see first page.

mined the effect, and the apostles would have determined the sign. This theory will be found to harmonize with the evidence of the New Testament.

In relation to baptism and the Eucharist we have express testimony that Christ immediately determined the matter and form which were to be employed ; but we have no such evidence that he determined imposition of hands to be the matter of confirmation. Nor was it necessary. He had promised the Holy Spirit to all who would believe in him. It was not to be the ordinary bestowal of the Holy Spirit which took place at the sanctification of the soul in baptism ; but it was to be an abundant outpouring of the Spirit in the soul of each individual believer, to enable him to profess Christ with knowledge and with fortitude. He conferred this grace on the apostles, at Pentecost, without any visible sacramental sign ; but when they in turn wished to communicate the gift to others they did so by imposition of hands. It is well to bear in mind that it cannot be proved from Scripture that Christ, during his lifetime, did not specify imposition of hands as the sacramental sign ; but it is far more probable that he left the choice of the matter to the apostles and the Church. How far this probability is confirmed by history will be seen later on.

To summarize briefly our conclusions :—In the earliest apostolic times, at the birth of the Church, there was in existence a rite of imposition of hands which conferred the Holy Spirit. This rite, though distinct from baptism, followed it as its immediate sequel and was regarded as its complement. It was reserved to the apostles ; and the power to perform it was not contained in the power to preach the Gospel and baptise. Its effect was not to be identified with the charismatic gifts of tongues and prophecy ; such phenomena were only visible manifestations of the essential grace. This essential grace was

distinct from baptism ; conferring a further interior sanctification and a more abundant outpouring of the Spirit on the soul of each individual, for the special purpose of enabling him to endure with wisdom and fortitude the trials of a Christian confessor. This effect was to be universal after Pentecost. Knowledge of the imposition of hands was reckoned as one of the elementary truths in the Christian communities. As regards its institution, there can be no doubt that the spiritual effect was directly determined by Jesus Christ himself ; but no argument can be advanced from the texts to prove that he declared that the matter should be the imposition of hands and nothing else. We are inclined to think that he left to the apostles and the Church the power of determining *in specie* the matter and form of this sacrament. What foundation there is for this opinion in the subsequent history of this sacrament will be investigated in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II.

IMPOSITION OF HANDS IN THE EARLY FATHERS.

THE New Testament, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, affords sufficient warrant for the belief that the apostles were wont to practise a rite of imposition of hands which was distinct from baptism, and which communicated a different kind of grace from that of baptism. Let us pursue our investigations somewhat further, to ascertain what traces of this rite may be found in early, uninspired Christian literature. The writings of the apostolic Fathers are scant, and from the fragments that have survived there is no additional information to be gleaned. St. Justin ¹ contents himself with a description of the first act of initiation, that is, baptism; and the same holds of the *Didache*. The second century Apologists, moreover, do not furnish any reference to the ceremony; but this need not surprise us when we bear in mind the meagreness of the evidence and the brief descriptions which are given even of baptism; and we may safely presume that imposition of hands, though not explicitly mentioned, was still in existence. Besides, whatever descriptions of the initiatory ceremonies are given were not drawn up for the instruction of the higher order, to whom pertained the imposition of hands.

The testimony of St. Irenaeus need not detain us. In support of his contention, that God, in his dealings with men, sometimes accommodates himself to human frailty, Irenaeus cites the text: "I have fed you with

¹ *Apol.* i. 61-65.

milk, not with meat, for hitherto you were not able to bear it " ; and, identifying the meat with the Holy Ghost, whom the Corinthians, owing to their infirmity, were not prepared to receive, he states that the apostles were accustomed to bestow this gift by imposition of hands : " For on whomsoever they imposed hands, they received the Holy Ghost, which is the meat of life." ¹ This does not necessarily imply that imposition was still practised in the time of Irenaeus ; and it is only when we come to Tertullian that we meet with the first full account of the ceremonies of Christian initiation. Tertullian wrote a special treatise on baptism ; and, in describing that ceremony, mentions the imposition of hands. This work was written while its author was in communion with the Church, and is a safe index to the custom of the time. The text is rather long. When he has explained how the primordial waters of creation, over which the Spirit of God hovered, were a figure of baptism, he thus concludes : " The waters in virtue of the pristine privilege of their origin, do, when God has been invoked, attain the sacramental power of sanctification ; for the Spirit immediately supervenes from the heavens and rests over the waters, sanctifying them from himself, and being thus sanctified, they imbibe the power of sanctifying . . . (As a result) man receives again that Spirit of God, which he had first received by the breathing of God upon him, but had afterwards lost by sin. Not that we obtain the Holy Spirit in the waters ; but in the water, under the influence of the angel, we are cleansed and prepared for the Holy Spirit. Here again a figure has preceded, for in the same manner John was forerunner to the Lord, preparing his ways. . . . After this, when we have issued from the font, we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction,—a custom derived from the ancient discipline, wherein, on entering the

¹ *Adv. Haer.* IV, xxxviii, 1, 2.

priesthood, men were accustomed to be anointed with oil, since the time when Aaron was anointed by Moses ; from which he is called a ' Christ,' from the ' chrism,' that is, the unction employed. And this unction gave his name to our Lord, being spiritually performed ; because he was anointed with the Spirit by God the Father. . . . Thus, too, in our case (as in the case of Christ) the unction takes place in the flesh, but is of spiritual profit ; in the same way as, in the actual baptism, the immersion in the water is a carnal transaction, but the effect is spiritual, in that we are delivered from our sins. After that, the hand is imposed on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through (the words of) benediction (*Dehinc manus imponitur, per benedictionem advocans et invitans Spiritum Sanctum*). If human ingenuity can summon a spirit into water, and then by the application of hands from above can make the conjunction of these elements breathe out another spirit of such clear sound, why shall it not be possible for God, in the case of his own organ (*i.e.* man), to produce by means of holy hands a sublime spiritual modulation ? " ¹ Tertullian then finds an Old Testament type of this, in the blessing which Ephraim and Manasses received at the hands of Jacob.

Though this is a more or less incidental reference to confirmation, introduced, as it would seem, for the purpose of illustrating his teaching on baptism, the importance which Tertullian attaches to the imposition of hands is well worthy of note. The waters of baptism, no doubt, derive all their efficacy from the sanctifying action of the Holy Ghost ; but the immersion itself, though clothing us in Christ and freeing us from sin, has no power to communicate the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. Tertullian expressly denies this power to baptism,—“ *Not that we obtain the Holy Spirit in the*

¹ *De Bapt.* 4 sq.

waters,"—which, according to him, is a mere forerunner whereby the way is prepared for the reception of the Holy Ghost,—“*In the water . . . we are cleansed and prepared for the Holy Spirit*,—as John prepared the way of the Lord. For the bestowal of the Spirit a rite altogether different from baptism is necessary; baptism, however, being an absolutely essential condition. Nor is it to the unction subsequent to baptism that the Holy Ghost is attributed, though this unction is of spiritual profit. He is given solely by an imposition of hands. That this rite of imposition is distinct from the baptism and the unction, can be seen from the care with which Tertullian selects a type of each from the Old Testament, as well as from the marked transition from one ceremony to the other: “*After this*, when we have issued from the font, *we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction. . . . After that, the hand is imposed on us*, invoking and inviting the Holy Ghost through benediction.” In Tertullian’s time, baptism and confirmation were usually administered together; and it is not improbable that in the passage before us he outlines the chronological order in which the different ceremonies were performed. The initiatory ceremonies are three in number; namely, baptism, unction, and imposition of hands; each of these confers its own distinctive benefit, that of the imposition being the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In the writings of Tertullian the imposition of hands is again mentioned, in a passage which supplements the preceding account considerably. It occurs in connection with his argument against Marcion’s theory of the inherent corruption of the flesh or body of man. Against this Tertullian recounts the provision which Christianity has made for the flesh, and explains that flesh is the condition on which the salvation of the soul depends: “The flesh is washed, in order that the soul may be cleansed; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated;

the flesh is signed, that the soul too may be fortified ; the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands, that the soul also may be illuminated by the Spirit ; the flesh is fed with the Body and Blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may grow fat on God." ¹ Here Tertullian sums up the whole of the initiatory ritual, as it was practised in his day, with the exception of the renunciation of the devil made by the candidate before baptism, and the drink of milk and honey which, as he elsewhere ² informs us, was given immediately after.

In the sentence quoted there are five clauses. The first and last undoubtedly refer to baptism and the Eucharist respectively ; but it is not clear how we should interpret the other three. In addition to the washing there is an anointing, a signing, and an imposition of hands before the administration of the Eucharist. The anointing is the same as that mentioned already in the passage quoted from the treatise on baptism. It is a real literal anointing, distinct both from the signing and the imposition of hands ; but the further question arises whether this unction properly belongs to confirmation ; so that Tertullian would bear witness to the use of chrism in that sacrament at his time. This text has been often quoted in that sense ; but we shall point out in the next chapter some difficulties which have to be met. Let it suffice here to note that the unction is followed immediately by the signing of the flesh with the cross, and is a ceremony quite distinct from the imposition of hands. Whatever be the correct interpretation, we can notice not only the well-defined clearness with which Tertullian distinguishes the different ceremonies, but the particular value which he attaches to the imposition ; which here, as in his work on baptism, has the specific effect of imparting the Holy Ghost.

¹ *De Resurr. Carn.*, cap. viii.

² *De Cor.*, cap. iii.

Passing from Tertullian to St. Cyprian, his disciple in the African Church, we find the same emphasis attached to the imposition of hands in the process of initiation. Throughout his Epistles, in many passages, and in language almost identical with that of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Cyprian recognises the importance and efficacy of imposition. A certain bishop named Jubaianus had consulted him about baptism; and Cyprian wrote a rather long epistle to enlighten him on the subject. This was in connection with the re-baptismal controversy. Cyprian had urged very strongly that all heretics who had been baptised outside the Church should be baptised again, on their conversion. His opponents, apparently, had objected that such a practice was contrary to the action of the apostles; since Peter and John did not re-baptise the Samaritan converts, but merely imposed hands on them for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost. Cyprian exposes the fallacy of this objection, by showing that the Samaritans had been already baptised in the Church, and not in an heretical sect. "And therefore, because they had obtained a legitimate and ecclesiastical baptism, it would not have been right to baptise them again. But only that which was still lacking was performed by Peter and John; viz., that prayer being made for them and hands being imposed, the Holy Ghost should be invoked and poured out upon them. And this is still done amongst us, that those who are baptised in the Church are presented to the prelates of the Church, and by means of our prayer and by the imposition of our hands obtain the Holy Ghost and are perfected with the seal of the Lord."¹ Another Epistle written to Pompeius in connection with the same controversy, brings out more clearly the relation between baptism and confirmation: "Moreover, a man is not born again by the imposition of hands when he receives

¹ Epist. lxxiii, 9.

the Holy Ghost ; but in baptism, that so, being already born, he may receive the Holy Ghost, even as it happened with the first man, Adam. God formed him first, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. For the Spirit cannot be received without the man first being in existence to receive him. But the birth of Christians is in baptism."¹

Comment on these two passages is almost superfluous. Here, as indeed throughout his entire writings, language could not more clearly express the sharp distinction which St. Cyprian draws between the two ceremonies of initiation and the different value which he attaches to them. Each has its own role to play in the process of initiation ; and though the value of baptism is independent of confirmation, the latter rite is altogether nugatory if baptism has not gone before. By baptism a man is spiritually regenerated, and prepared for the Holy Ghost, as Tertullian would have said. Nothing can supply its place, for it is the only means of giving new birth. Nevertheless when a man has been baptised there is still something lacking. Full and complete regeneration is obtained only when this is supplied ; and as Peter and John prayed for and imposed hands on the Samaritans, who were already baptised, in order to confer the Holy Ghost ; so also, St. Cyprian informs us, those who, in his time had been recently baptised, were brought to the bishop to receive the same grace by the same ceremony. The agreement in language and doctrine between Tertullian and St. Cyprian is very striking ; while both are in perfect harmony with the account presented by St. Luke. It will be noted that with Cyprian, as with Tertullian, the imposition of hands is the principal feature of the second act of initiation. It is in fact the only rite which has the peculiar effect of giving the Holy Ghost ; and, as far as these passages are concerned, it

¹ Ep. lxxiv, 7.

would seem to be the only rite which deserves to be contrasted with baptism.

Clement of Alexandria refers to the imposition of hands, but it is not certain whether it is confirmation or an ordinary blessing which the faithful received every day. It is more likely the allusion is to the latter. Of women who wear false hair, he says, curiously, that it is not those who are so decked out, but persons altogether different, whom the priest blesses when he imposes hands : " For on whom does the presbyter impose his hand (in such circumstances) ? Whom does he bless ? Not the women so adorned, but another's hairs, and through them a different head." ¹

Origen, the illustrious disciple of Clement, does not supply us with any detailed information in regard to the initiation ceremonies. He alludes, indeed, to the imposition of hands ; but however suggestive, his words do not necessarily imply that it was in use in his time. " In the Acts of the Apostles," he writes, " through the imposition of the hands of the apostles the Holy Ghost was accustomed to be given in baptism."² From this extract it might seem that the Holy Ghost was given in the act of immersion ; but that the word " baptism " must get a wider meaning, so as to include confirmation, can be inferred from another passage in the same book : " Lastly, for this reason, the grace and revelation of the Holy Ghost was bestowed by the imposition of the apostles' hands after baptism."³ From these passages it can be seen that Origen was well aware of the apostolic practice ; and though he does not indicate the practice of his own time, there is no suggestion that he recognised the least distinction between the two. Had there been any difference, we would expect a hint, at least. There is no reason to posit any difference between the Alexandrian practice and that of Tertullian and Cyprian.

¹ *Paed.* iii, 11.

² *De Princ.* I, iii 2.

³ *Ib.*, 7.

No less emphasis is placed on the imposition of hands by some Councils held in the first quarter of the fourth century. In 306, the Council of Elvira, in Spain, issued several decrees with regard to confirmation. Canon 38 reads : " A member of the faithful (who has been baptised himself, and has not been married a second time) can baptise a sick person in case of necessity, on condition that if he survives, he must lead him to the bishop to be perfected by the imposition of hands." The Council thus recognises the validity and liceity of baptism administered by a layman in case of necessity ; implying at the same time, that he cannot perform the imposition of hands. This is reserved to the bishop ; and although the effect of this rite is not mentioned, so plainly as to indicate confirmation, nevertheless from the fact that it is distinct from baptism and is reserved to a bishop, we may conclude that the Elvira Fathers contemplated the same rite as Tertullian and St. Cyprian. This is confirmed by the fact that confirmation is regarded as the "perfecting" of a Christian. In Canon 39, immediately following, we meet with this direction : " If the Gentiles, when in sickness, desire that hands should be imposed on them, it hath seemed good, if their life was in any way blameless, that hands should be imposed on them to become Christians." This canon has led to a vast amount of speculation ; some holding that there is question solely of baptism. The better view, however, is that the Fathers of Elvira contemplated those converts from paganism, who had been baptised on their deathbed without having passed through the catechumenate, and decided that such should not be deprived of the benefit of confirmation. A later canon, n. 77, directs the bishop to perfect, by benediction, those whom a deacon may baptise in the absence of a bishop or priest (*episcopus eos per benedictionem perficere debet*). Although the reference to confirmation in this canon is not explicit, still,

when we consider that Tertullian mentions "benediction" as a means of conveying the Holy Ghost (*dehinc manus imponitur, per benedictionem advocans et invitans Spiritum Sanctum*), and that the canon reserves this "benediction" to the bishop, it is almost certain that there is question of confirmation. The Council of Arles in 314, in its sixth canon, reinforces canon 39 of the Council of Elvira, so we need not dwell on it. It is a remarkable fact that throughout all these canons we never find the least allusion to the employment of unction in the sacrament of confirmation.

So far we have been dealing with the imposition of hands in ordinary confirmation. We have now to consider another ceremony which prevailed in the early Church, and which very closely resembled that of confirmation—to wit, imposition of hands in the reconciliation of heretics who were baptised outside the Church. This may be found to throw considerable light on the subject of our inquiry.

When, towards the close of the second century, heretical sects began to have separate organisation, the question of initiation into such a sect began to attract attention. Tertullian casually discusses it and gives a solution in his treatise on baptism, where, moreover, he informs us that he had written a more complete work on the same subject, in Greek. Unfortunately, this latter work has perished, but the main outlines of his solution are preserved in his work on baptism: "There is to us, one, and only one baptism . . . insomuch as 'One God, and one baptism, and one Church in the heavens.' But it must be admitted that the question, 'what rules are to be observed with regard to heretics?' is worthy of being treated. Heretics have no fellowship in our discipline, whom the mere fact of their excommunication testifies to be outsiders . . . they and we have not the same God, nor one—that is the same—Christ, and there-

fore their baptism is not one either, because it is not the same. And since they have it not duly, doubtless they have it not at all; nor is that to be counted which is not had; thus they cannot receive it either, because they have it not.”¹ Apparently this solution of Tertullian, which denied the validity of heretical baptism, prevailed and was acted upon in the African Church, and especially in the Metropolitan See of Carthage. At Rome, however, the opposite view prevailed, and the two practices came into collision in the time of St. Cyprian. Pope St. Stephen wrote to Cyprian commanding him to discontinue his practice. Part of the text of St. Stephen’s letter has been preserved among the writings of Cyprian: “Among other things, he even added this, saying: ‘If anyone, therefore, come to you from any heresy whatsoever, let nothing be innovated, which has not been handed down, that hands should be imposed on him for penance, since the heretics themselves do not baptise such as come to them from one another, but admit them to communion.’”²

At first sight it would seem that there is no allusion to confirmation in Stephen’s decree; but there are many serious difficulties against such an interpretation. In the first place it can be established with certainty that Cyprian and his colleagues put a different construction on the decree. The argument—one whose logic would seem to be irresistible—which Cyprian never tires of urging against Stephen, has no meaning if the imposition of hands mentioned in the decree has no reference to confirmation. “If they attribute the effect of baptism to the majesty of the name, so that those who are baptised anywhere and anyhow, are judged to be renewed and sanctified; why do not the baptised persons in the name of the same Christ receive the imposition of hands there (in an heretical sect) for the reception of the Holy

¹*De Bap.*, cap. xv.

²*Ep.* lxxiv, c. i.

Ghost? Why does not the same majesty of the same name avail in the imposition of hands, which, they contend, availed in the sanctification of baptism?"¹ And again: "But the subject in regard to which we had chiefly to write to you . . . namely, that those who have been dipped abroad outside the Church, and have been stained among heretics and schismatics with the taint of profane water, when they come to us and to the Church which is one, ought to be baptised, for the reason that it is a small matter to impose hands on them that they may receive the Holy Ghost, unless they receive also the baptism of the Church. For then indeed can they be fully sanctified if they are born of each sacrament."²

It will be observed that St. Cyprian identifies the imposition of hands in Stephen's decree with the imposition for the reception of the Holy Ghost. His argument, put briefly, amounts to this: You admit that heretics can baptise, why then can they not give the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands? If the decree did not allude in any way to the confirmation of the heretics, the whole point in Cyprian's argument would be absurd, and Stephen would have the obvious reply that he referred to penance, or to some ceremony of reconciliation symbolical of penance. Moreover, when St. Cyprian discusses the reception of heretics who had formerly been baptised in the Church, he requires merely an imposition of hands for penance, but nowhere does he attribute the effect of the Holy Ghost to this ceremony: "Which ancient custom we observe in the present day, that it is sufficient *to impose hands for penance upon those who are known to have been baptised in the Church*, if, subsequently acknowledging their sin and their error, they return to the truth and their parent."³ From this it would seem that there were two impositions of hands,

¹ Ib., c. 5.² Ep. lxxii, c. 1.³ Ep. lxxi, 2.

one performed on a heretic who had been baptised in the Church, the other on a heretic who had been baptised in an heretical sect. The former was a mere penitential observance, to which St. Cyprian could never have any objection, and on which he could never base an argument against St. Stephen; the latter was an imposition of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. It was the basis of Cyprian's argument as is plain from the charge of inconsistency levelled against the decree; and it tends to prove that the second imposition was not a mere penitential ceremony, but included something in addition.

It was in this sense also the decree was understood far away from Africa, by Firmilian and the Church of Asia Minor: "All power and grace are established in the Church where the elders preside, who possess both the power of baptising, and of imposition of hands, and of ordaining. For as a heretic may not lawfully ordain, nor lay on hands, so neither can he baptise. . . . All which we sometime back confirmed in Iconium, a place in Phrygia, when we were assembled together with those who had gathered from Galatia and Cilicia and other neighbouring countries, as to be held and firmly vindicated against heretics, when there was some doubt in certain minds concerning that matter. And as Stephen and those who agree with him contend that putting away of sins and second birth may result from the baptism of heretics, among whom they themselves confess the Holy Spirit is not, let them consider and understand that spiritual birth cannot be without the Spirit; in conformity with which also the blessed Apostle Paul baptised anew with a spiritual baptism those who had been already baptised by John, before the Holy Spirit had been sent by the Lord, and so imposed hands on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. But what kind of a thing is it, that when we see that Paul, after John's baptism, baptised

his disciples again, we hesitate to baptise those who come to the Church from heresy after their unhallowed and profane dipping; unless, perchance, Paul was inferior to the bishops of these times, so that these indeed can by the imposition of hands alone give the Holy Spirit to those heretics who come, while Paul was not fitted to give the Holy Spirit by an imposition of hands to those who had been baptised by John, unless he had first baptised them also with the baptism of the Church?"¹

This rather long quotation gives the substance of Firmilian's retort to Stephen. He claims to speak in the name of many bishops of Asia Minor, and his position is almost identical with that of Cyprian. Going on the assumption that confirmation and ordination administered by heretics are invalid, he argues that the same reason exists for the invalidity of their baptism. He puts the imposition of hands in the reconciliation rite on the same level with order and baptism; and he identifies this imposition with the ceremony which St. Paul performed on the Ephesian disciples. There is no indication that he recognised the least difference between the two; one was a continuation of the other. This identity so clearly expressed by Firmilian is conclusive proof that he understood the Pope's decree to refer to confirmation; for Firmilian imposition of hands in reconciliation and confirmation were one and the same thing. This conclusion is confirmed by the effect which is ascribed to the reconciliation ceremony, namely, the reception of the Holy Ghost; which in the technical language of that epoch was always spoken of as the peculiar effect of confirmation.

A still more convincing argument is furnished by the author of *De Rebaptismate*, who undertook to defend the position of St. Stephen. "I observe," he writes, "that it has been asked among the brethren what rules

¹ Ep. lxxv, 7, 8.

should specially be adopted in regard to those who, though baptised in heresy, have yet been baptised in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and subsequently departing from their heresy should repent with their whole hearts and implore from the Church the help of salvation; whether, according to the most ancient and ecclesiastical tradition, it would suffice after that baptism which they had received outside indeed, but still in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, that hands alone should be imposed on them by the bishop for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and the imposition of hands would thus afford them the renewed and perfected seal of faith; or whether indeed a repetition of baptism would be necessary for them?"¹ Such is the question which the author proposes for discussion in the opening chapter of his work. It will be remarked that his notion of the imposition of hands coincides exactly with that of St. Cyprian; though he is writing from a different standpoint, and has a completely different estimate of the value of heretical baptism. He states the question in terms such as might have been used by Cyprian himself. There is an imposition of hands on the converted heretics for the reception of the Holy Ghost. If this imposition were a mere reconciliatory ceremony, having no relation to confirmation, the question is stated in a very curious manner, and the opposition of Cyprian is inexplicable. The author's solution, moreover, implies that the imposition in question was not a mere penitential observance. "And thus, since our salvation is founded in the baptism of the Spirit, which for the most part is associated with the baptism of water. . . . If, however, it (*i.e.*, baptism) should have been administered by strangers, let this matter be amended as it can and as it allows. Because outside the Church there is no Holy Ghost, faith also cannot exist, not alone among heretics but even among

¹ *De Rebapt.*, c. 1.

those who are established in schism. And for that reason those who do penance and are amended by the doctrine of the truth, and by their own faith which subsequently has been improved by the purification of their heart, should be aided only by spiritual baptism, that is, by the imposition of the bishop's hands, and by the ministration of the Holy Ghost." ¹ This seems to indicate that penance should precede the imposition of hands ; but, whether this is so or not, if we compare the passage before us with others in the same work, we shall at once come to the conclusion that to the mind of the author imposition of hands in the reconciliation rite was identical with confirmation. His argument for the imposition on converted heretics is based throughout on undoubted references to confirmation in the New Testament. There is no indication that he recognised the least difference in value between the two ceremonies. Neither in the person of the minister, nor in the rite itself, nor in the effect ascribed to the rite, does he hint at any distinction. Speaking of the imposition of hands performed on converted heretics, he says that it is sometimes found separate from baptism in the New Testament, though both were usually administered together in his own time. He instances the case of the Samaritans, when Peter and John conferred the Holy Ghost by an imposition of hands on those who had been already baptised by Philip. Going on to note how the Ethiopian eunuch baptised by Philip did not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of the bishop's hands, he thus concludes : " But if you admit this, and believe it to be saving, and do not gainsay the opinion of all the faithful, you must needs confess this, that even as this principle proceeds to be more largely discussed, that other also can be more broadly established ; that is, that by the imposition of hands alone of the bishop

¹ *Ib.*, c. 10.

—because baptism in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ has gone before it—may the Holy Ghost also be given to another man who repents and believes.”¹ Such reasoning implies that the author regarded the two ceremonies as formally identical. He admits, indeed, the validity of heretical baptism ; but, according to him, it is of avail only when the heretic becomes converted, does penance, and receives in the Church the complement of baptism, that is to say, the imposition of hands which imparts the Holy Ghost.

From such an analysis of this famous controversy one would be inclined to believe the decree of Stephen contained a reference to confirmation. It is difficult to understand how the Churches of Africa and Asia Minor could both have misunderstood the document. Moreover, not only St. Stephen’s opponents in the controversy, but his very friends, seem to have interpreted him in the same sense, that is, that he referred to confirmation in the decree.

The subsequent history of this ceremony points to the same conclusion. Under the influence of St. Cyprian, the Church of Africa continued its old practice till the end of the third century. The Council of Arles in 314 felt called on to legislate on the matter. Canon 8 reads : “In regard to the Africans, who use their own law of re-baptism, it hath seemed good, that, if anyone comes to the Church from this heresy, let them examine him on the symbol, and if they learn that he has been baptised in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, let hands alone be imposed on him for the reception of the Holy Ghost. But if, when examined, he does not mention the Trinity, let him be baptised.”² The Council upholds the decision of Stephen in regard to the validity of heretical baptism. There is a considerable difference of opinion as to what African custom of re-baptism is referred to ;

¹ *Ib.*, c. 3, 4.

² Mansi, tom. ii, col. 472.

but it is almost certain that the Council had in mind both the custom of the Donatists and that of St. Cyprian ; which latter still lingered in parts of the African Church. We know from St. Optatus that the Donatists re-baptised those who came to them from the Catholic Church ; and there is evidence to show that they also repeated some kind of rite which corresponded to confirmation. Optatus ¹ informs us that Donatus himself was condemned by a synod of nineteen bishops at Rome, because he confessed that he had re-baptised and imposed hands on lapsed bishops. Authorities are agreed that the imposition of hands mentioned by the Roman synod signified an admission to penance ; but such does not seem to be the primary signification of the imposition mentioned at the Council of Arles, for there can be no doubt that the Fathers of the Council contemplate the same rite as was before the minds of St. Stephen and St. Cyprian in the dispute concerning the method of reconciling heretics. The Council recognised the validity of the first act of heretical initiation, if it had been performed in the name of the Trinity ; but it rejected the second part of the initiation, and orders this to be repeated. It is to be repeated by imposition of hands, to impart the Holy Ghost.

We also find a reference to this ceremony in the Council of Nice, which makes a distinction between the Novatians and the partisans of Paul of Samosata. Canon 8 reads : " In regard to those who call themselves Cathari (Novatians), that is, undefiled, if at any time they come to the Catholic and Apostolic Church, it hath seemed good to the holy and grand Council, that, receiving the imposition of hands, they so remain in the clergy . . . that they may follow in all things the decrees of the Church. But either in villages or in towns where their clergy alone are found ordained, these shall rank in the

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xi., col. 932.

same order. But if a priest or a bishop of the Catholic Church be amongst them, it is clear that the bishop of the Catholic Church shall have the dignity of bishop; but he who has the title of bishop among the Cathari shall have the priestly dignity; unless, indeed, it is the pleasure of the bishop to bestow on him the title of bishop." ¹ With regard to the partisans of Paul of Samosata, the Council decrees (can. 19) that those "who seek the Catholic Church should by all means be baptised. But if, indeed, any of them in the time past were in the ranks of the clergy, if they seemed blameless and irreprehensible, let them be baptised and ordained by a bishop of the Catholic Church." ²

In the eighth canon two impositions of hands are mentioned, of which the first has occasioned some controversy; some critics holding that it refers to ordination. This seems the natural interpretation at first sight; but it will scarcely bear critical analysis. For the latter part of the canon recognizes the validity of Novatian ordinations, by allowing their clergy to continue in their position; with the restriction, that, if there are two bishops in any place, the one Catholic, the other Novatian, the Novatian must yield preference to the Catholic. If the Council recognized the validity of Novatian ordinations, then the imposition of hands at

¹ "De his, qui se catharos, id est, puros, quandoque nominant, ad catholicam autem et apostolicam ecclesiam accedunt, sanctae mag-naeque synodo visum est, ut impositis eis manibus (χειροθετούμενους), sic maneant in clerico . . . ut ipsi sequantur in omnibus ecclesiae decreta. Ubi ergo omnes, sive in vicis, sive in urbibus, ipsi soli inveniuntur ordinati (χειροτονηθέντες), qui inveniuntur in clerico erunt in eodem modo. Si autem catholicae ecclesiae episcopo vel presbytero existente accedunt aliqui, clarum est quod ecclesiae quidem episcopus episcopi dignitatem habebit: qui autem apud eos qui cathari dicuntur, nominatur episcopus, presbyteri honorem habebit; nisi utique episcopo placeat ipsum nominis honorem impertire." Mansi, tom. ii, col. 671.

² "De Paulinistis, qui deinde ad ecclesiam confugerunt, statutum est, ut ii omnino rebaptizentur. Si qui vero tempore praeterito in clericorum numero erant, si quidem a culpa et reprehensione alieni visi fuerint, rebaptizati ordinentur (χειροτονεῖσθαι) a catholicae ecclesiae episcopo." *Ib.*, col. 677, 678.

their reception into the Church cannot refer to ordination. It must signify the same ceremony as was familiar to Cyprian and the Council of Arles. It may be noted also that the first imposition of hands,—which is in dispute,—is designated by the Greek word *χειροθεσία*; while the word for ordination, both in the same canon and in the nineteenth, is the Greek word *χειροτονία*; which implies that the two impositions are different rites.

It was in this sense the canon was interpreted at Rome towards the second half of the fourth century. When consulted by Himerius, Bishop of Tarragona, on the necessity of re-baptising converts from Arianism, Pope Siricius decides, invoking the authority of Nice, that: "Those who are baptised by the impious Arians . . . as well as the Novatians and other heretics, as has been established in the synod, we join to the Catholic Communion by means of the invocation of the sevenfold Spirit only, by the imposition of the episcopal hand, and this custom is observed throughout the entire East and West."¹ Siricius complains that the directions of Nice had not been enforced by some bishops; he equiparates the Arians with the Novatians, and enjoins that both should be restored to communion by an imposition of the bishop's hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. This confirms the view that the imposition of hands prescribed by the Council of Nice for repentant Novatians was not an imposition for ordination, but was akin to confirmation. If the reconciliatory rite mentioned by Siricius is not the same as confirmation, at any rate both were performed by the same minister and both had precisely the same spiritual value, as far as language goes.

¹ "Baptizatos ab impiis Arianis. . . . Quos nos cum Novatianis aliisque haereticis, sicuti est in Synodo constitutum, per invocationem solam septiformis Spiritus, episcopalis manus impositione, catholicorum conventui sociamus, quod etiam totus Oriens Occidensque custodit." Denz., *Ench. Symb.*, n. 88.

Neither the Council of Nice, nor Pope Siricius, nor any of the witnesses whom we have adduced so far in connection with the baptismal controversy, ever alludes to unction in the reconciliatory rite; they know of nothing but imposition of hands. At the same time it is quite possible that the statement of Siricius:—"this custom is observed throughout the entire East and West"—refers merely to the fact that Arians and Novatians are not re-baptised, and does not imply that there was no other element in the reconciliation ceremony in the East; for, as we shall see, there is evidence to show that, at the very time Siricius wrote to Himerius, the Eastern ceremony was not identical with the Western.

Some short time before Siricius filled the papal chair, a distinct development took place in the East. Unction was introduced into the reconciliation ceremony; while the old simple rite of imposition was tenaciously retained in the West. This is very interesting in view of what we shall have to say later on in connection with chrism in confirmation. The Council of Laodicea, in Asia Minor, bears witness to the existence of unction in connection with the reconciliation ceremony. The date of this Council is by no means certain; but it is generally ascribed to the third quarter of the fourth century. Two canons are devoted to the method of reconciling heretics. Canon 7, according to the version of Hervetus, in Mansi reads: "Those who are converted from the Novatian or from the Quartodeciman heresy, whether among the heretics they are called catechumens or faithful, are not to be admitted before anathematising all heresy, and especially that in which they lived; and then those who were called faithful amongst them, learning the symbols of faith, and having been anointed with holy chrism are thus to communicate in the Holy Mystery." ¹ The canon immediately following commands

¹ Mansi, tom. ii, col. 566.

that those who come from a sect known as the Phryges should be re-baptised, and not be regarded as having a valid baptism. The versions given by Dionysius Exiguus and Isidore Mercator are substantially the same. Both testify to the use of chrism in the reconciliation ceremony. The faithful mentioned in the canon are those who were baptised in an heretical sect, as opposed to the catechumens or uninitiated. Although we are not told the effect of the reconciliation ceremony so plainly as to feel that it is identical with confirmation ; nevertheless, since Eastern writers almost contemporary with the Council attribute the gift of the Holy Ghost to chrism in confirmation, we may presume that chrism has the same value in the reconciliation rite. Besides, the Council regards chrism as a preparation for the Eucharist, which was administered in the early Church immediately after baptism and confirmation. In addition, the emphatic language which is applied to chrism indicates that it had some extraordinary virtue ; in canon 48 it is termed "super-celestial," and is credited with making us partakers of the kingdom of heaven.

But whether the Council of Laodicea regarded the chrism of the reconciliation rite as having the same value as confirmation or not, there can be little doubt about canon 7 of the Council of Constantinople. This canon, though not emanating from the Ecumenical Council of 381, bears testimony to the prominent place occupied by chrism in the reconciliation ceremony in the East about this period, or at least shortly after. Heretics who were baptised outside the Church are divided into two classes : those whose baptism is considered valid, and those whose baptism is rejected by the Church. The latter were to be baptised again on their conversion ; but in regard to the former the Council prescribes that : "giving certificates and anathematising all heresy, which is not in accordance with the Holy Catholic Apostolic

Church of God ; and being signed or anointed first with the holy chrism on the forehead, the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth, and the ears ; and signing them we say : ' The seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost.' " ¹ This canon, which at a later date was inserted bodily in the Council of Trullo, testifies to the use of unction in the reconciliation ceremony at an early period in the East. Moreover, it corresponded exactly, as we shall see further on, with the sacrament of confirmation as it was then administered in the Eastern Church. Chrism seems to occupy the place of importance in the ceremony, no mention being made of the imposition of hands. This shows a distinct development since the Council of Nice. But we shall see in the next chapter how imposition was still retained.

Notwithstanding this development in the East, the old simple ceremony of imposition of hands alone held its ground unchanged even in the slightest particular throughout the West generally, but especially in Rome. There was a reason for this. On the strength of tradition Rome had interfered with St. Cyprian's logic, and she would be loath to sanction any innovation. The language of the Popes shows that there was no change. At the time of Siricius,—whom we have already heard, in connection with the eighth canon of Nice,—unction, apparently, had not been introduced. And his successors,—Gregory the Great especially,—not only imply no change, but speak of the reconciliation rite as if it was identical with the ceremony of the third century, and as if the imposition of hands therein was the sacrament of confirmation.

In the opening years of the fifth century, Pope Innocent I. ordains that "those who return from the Montanist and Novatian heresies should be received only by an imposition of hands . . . except those who went from us to them and were re-baptised. If these latter, repenting

¹ Mansi, tom. iii, col. 563.

and thinking of their danger, wish to come back, they must be admitted by undergoing a long satisfaction of penance.”¹ There is no mention made of unction, but only of imposition of hands. Moreover, from the distinction made in the decree, one is inclined to think the imposition of hands commanded by Innocent was not a mere ceremony of penitential observance. Two classes of heretics are set over against each other; a different method of treatment being prescribed for each. Those who were initiated in the Catholic Church were to undergo a long satisfaction of penance, but no imposition of hands is prescribed in their case; while those who were initiated by the Montanists and Novatians required an imposition. This implies that two distinct ceremonies of reconciliation were then in vogue. Innocent, apparently, recognized the validity of Montanist and Novatian baptism, but rejected their confirmation. How far such a conclusion would be correct will be investigated in a subsequent chapter.

Evidence still more explicit is supplied by Leo the Great, about the middle of the fifth century. In an Epistle to Neo, the bishop of Ravenna, Leo writes as follows: “But if it is proved that anyone has been baptised by heretics, in such a case let there be no approach to a repetition of the sacrament of regeneration, but let that only be conferred which was absent there, namely, that through the imposition of the bishop’s hand he may obtain the power of the Holy Ghost.”² As may be observed, Leo connects the grace of the Holy Ghost with the imposition of hands in the reconciliation ceremony. That this imposition was altogether distinct from that in penance can be inferred from Leo’s Epistle to

¹ “*Ut venientes a Novatianis vel Montensibus, per manus tantum impositionem suscipiantur; . . . praeter eos, si qui forte a nobis ad illos transeuntes rebaptizati sunt. Hi si resipiscentes et ruinam suam cogitantes redire voluerint, sub longa penitentiae satisfactione admittendi sunt.*” Mansi, tom. iii, col. 1034.

² Migne, P. L., tom. liv, col. 1094.

Nicetas, bishop of Aquileia ; wherein the Pope distinguishes between those who had become heretics after being baptised in the Church, and those who had been reared and baptised in heresy. For the former the reconciliation rite prescribed is an imposition of hands for penance—*non nisi per penitentiae remedium, et per impositionem episcopalis manus, communionis recipiant unitatem*—the Holy Ghost not being ascribed to the ceremony ; while those who were baptised in heresy are to be confirmed solely by invocation of the Holy Ghost through imposition of hands—*sola invocatione Spiritus Sancti per impositionem manuum confirmandi sunt*.¹ Heretical baptism, like that of Catholic Church, is not to be abused by repetition ; but since heretics cannot confer the Holy Ghost, hands must be imposed for his reception on those who were baptised in heresy. In his Epistle to Rusticus² Leo prescribes the same method of reconciling heretics who had been baptised outside the Church.

That at Rome there were two different reconciliation ceremonies is implied also in a letter ascribed to Pope Vigilius, who had been consulted by Eutherius as to the manner of receiving those who had departed from the Catholic Church and had been re-baptised by the Arians. Vigilius states that the reconciliation of such people is not effected “ by that imposition of hands which takes place through the invocation of the Holy Ghost but by that (imposition) whereby the fruit of penance is acquired, and the restoration of holy communion is accomplished.”³ Before issuing this decree, Vigilius tells us, he made sure of his ground by examining the legislation and documents of his predecessors ; his

¹ *Ib.*, col. 1138.

² *Ib.*, col. 1209.

³ “ *Quorum tamen reconciliatio non per illam impositionem manus, quae per invocationem Sancti Spiritus fit, operatur, sed per illam qua penitentiae fructus acquiritur, et sanctae communionis restitutio perficitur.*” *Mansi*, tom. ix, col. 31.

conclusion undoubtedly being that imposition of hands on one who had been baptised in heresy was altogether different from the imposition for penance whereby those were reconciled who had been baptised in the Catholic Church.

A letter written by Gregory the Great towards the close of the sixth century throws considerable light on this matter. Having being consulted by Quiricus and some other bishops, probably Spaniards, as to the method of admitting the Nestorians into the Church, Gregory took occasion to outline the different modes of reconciling heretics. "And indeed from the ancient institution of the Fathers we have learned that those who were baptised in the name of the Trinity among heretics, when they return to the Holy Church, are renewed to the bosom of the Church either by an unction of chrism, or by an imposition of hands, or by a mere profession of faith. Hence the West receives the Arians by an imposition of hands, on their entrance into the Church ; the East, however, receives them by an unction of holy chrism ; Monophysites, indeed, it receives by a profession of faith alone ; because the holy baptism which they obtained among the heretics receives then in their case the power of cleansing, since either the former receive the Holy Ghost by an imposition of hands, or the latter on account of a profession of the true faith are united to the bowels of the Holy and Universal Church." ¹ Three methods of reconciling heretics are here outlined, an imposition of hands, an unction with chrism, and a mere profession of faith. Attention is drawn to the difference in practice between the East and West, in dealing with the Arians. The gift of the Holy Ghost is attributed to the imposition of hands. The fact that Gregory distinguishes between this imposition and a profession of faith, indicates that he recognized some necessity and

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. lxxvii, col. 1204, et seq.

virtue in the former which is not in the latter. This implies that there was something more in the imposition than in the profession, and when he ascribes to imposition the effect of the Holy Ghost, it would seem that he judged it to have the same value as confirmation. How far this conclusion must be modified in the light of the teaching of St. Augustine, and of the developments which had already taken place in the ceremony of ordinary confirmation, will be seen in the fifth chapter, when we come to examine some of the theological aspects of the reconciliation ceremony. There also we shall see that, when Gregory states that the West receives the Arians by an imposition of hands, he must not be understood to speak of the entire West; for although his statement is true of Rome and Africa, there is evidence to prove that an unction of chrism had been already introduced into the reconciliation ceremony in Gaul and Spain.

Returning, after this long digression, to the imposition of hands in ordinary confirmation; and bearing in mind that, as we have seen, the witnesses of the third century were acquainted with the use of imposition by the apostles, and that they testify to the continuance of the rite in their own time, we may close this chapter by a reference to show that one fourth century Father was familiar with the same rite. St. Athanasius is well aware of the imposition practised by the apostles and of its value in the process of initiation. Having said that, by co-operation of the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son, "the washing of regeneration restores us to that primitive state which existed before the fall of Adam," he proceeds: "And just as Adam was created receiving the Spirit of life, and man became a living soul, and, having the Holy Spirit, was a spiritual being, so that he even prophesied . . . saying 'This is the mother of all living'; likewise all the saints, having received the

Holy Spirit, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, through the imposition of the hands of the priest of God, are restored to that primitive state, in which they were before Adam fell." ¹ Athanasius regards the imposition of hands as an essential complement of the washing of regeneration ; it is that part of the initiation whereby we receive the Holy Ghost and are restored to the condition which God originally intended for us. The testimony is interesting from another point of view. Athanasius is the last eastern writer who speaks of the imposition of hands as a still living rite. From this time forward, the chrism is always mentioned in the East, any reference to imposition of hands seeming to be inspired by exegetical reasons. In the West, however, the references to the imposition continue till a much later time. But more about this hereafter.

¹ *De Trin. et Sp. Sto.*, §§ 8, 21.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISM IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

By analysis of the New Testament evidence we came to the conclusion that there was an imposition of hands in the sacrament of confirmation in the time of the apostles. Furthermore, an examination of the early Fathers convinced us of the importance which was attached to this imposition by the successors of the apostles. This element in the initiation ceremony was intimately connected with the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Another element, chrism, has been emphasised in more recent times. "The second sacrament is confirmation, the matter of which is chrism, made of oil and balsam, blessed by a bishop." ¹ So reads the Decree of Eugene IV. for the Armenians. The Council of Trent also anathematises anyone who does not attribute some efficacy to this chrism: "If anyone says that they offer an insult to the Holy Ghost, who ascribe some value to the sacred chrism of confirmation; let him be anathema." ² Whoever is acquainted with any of the larger treatises on confirmation, will know of the controversy which has raged in regard to the essential matter of the sacrament. Some have maintained that it consists in the imposition of hands, some in an unction with chrism, some in either separately, while others require a combination of both. We do not propose to enter into the details of this controversy, for the present; but, rather, to concentrate our attention on the history of chrism in the early Church; and to ascertain

¹ Denz., *Ench. Symb.*, n. 697. ² *Ib.* n. 872.

if at that time it formed an essential element in the sacrament. Before doing so, it may be well to state that there can be no doubt that chrism is now the essential matter of the sacrament.

Some writers, who uphold this opinion, have asserted that unction began in apostolic times, and was sometimes employed by the apostles in administering confirmation. Attempts have been made to prove this from the New Testament. Texts like the following are quoted: "He that establishes us with you into Christ, and who anointed us, is God; who also sealed us, and gave the earnest of the spirit in our hearts":¹—"And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. . . . And as for you, let the unction, which you have received from him, abide in you. And you have no need that any man teach you, but as his unction teacheth you all things; and it is true and no lie"²:—"Grieve not the Spirit—the Holy Spirit of God; whereby you were sealed unto the day of redemption."³ Do these texts imply that the practice of unction was common in the time of the apostles, and that the practice made such language natural and intelligible? Does the "sealing" of the Ephesians refer to the signing of the forehead with chrism at confirmation? At first sight it might appear so; but, on a careful examination of the texts, we are inclined to doubt whether that is the true interpretation.

Commentators hold, generally, that the texts in the Corinthians and Ephesians have reference to baptism, and that the sealing mentioned is not the signing with chrism at confirmation, but the sacramental seal or character. It is in fact in these very texts of St. Paul that the scriptural basis for the doctrine of the sacramental character is found. The word "seal" (*σφραγίς*) is used once for circumcision in the Epistle to the Romans: "And he (Abraham) received the sign of

¹ 2 Cor., i, 21, 22.

² 1 John, ii, 20, 27.

³ Ephes., iv, 30

circumcision, a seal of the justice of the faith which he had being uncircumcised";¹ but in the other two passages of the New Testament² in which it occurs, outside the Apocalypse, its signification is metaphorical and not literal. The verb "to seal" (*σφραγίζειν*) occurs in three other passages, and in each of these also its signification is metaphorical.³ It occurs in the Gospel of St. Matthew,⁴ in connection with the sealing of the stone of the Lord's sepulchre; where it is employed in the literal sense, but obviously has no reference to baptism or confirmation. Nor does the literal sense fit very well into the passage from the Ephesians; for they are said to be sealed, not with chrism, but with the Holy Ghost. Besides, the use of the word "seal" in relation to the Jewish rite of circumcision, strongly suggests that St. Paul is referring to its Christian counterpart, baptism. From all this it would seem that the "sealing" in these texts is metaphorical.

So also is the anointing. This is manifest in the passage from the Epistle of St. John. In the context St. John is putting his readers on their guard against pernicious doctrine. He exhorts them to hold steadfast to the faith which they had received, because the anointing from the Holy One is sufficient to teach them all things. The anointing is evidently the true doctrine, with the effect which it had produced at their conversion. Moreover, it is difficult to understand how John could have called a literal unction the truth and no lie.

Neither does the unction seem to be used in the literal sense in the passage cited from the Corinthians. The word "unction" (*χρίσμα*) is found in no other place in the New Testament; but the verb "to anoint" (*χρίειν*) occurs in four other passages,⁵ in all of which it has a

¹ Rom., iv, 11.

² 1 Cor., ix, 2; 2 Tim., ii, 19.

³ John, iii, 33; vi, 27; Rom. xv, 28.

⁴ Matt., xxviii, 66.

⁵ Luke, iv, 18; Acts, iv, 27; x, 38; Heb., i, 9.

metaphorical and not a literal signification. This goes to show that it is not used in the literal sense here. Even if it were admitted that there is reference to a literal unction, we have no means of connecting it with the sacrament of confirmation. On the other hand, it is easy to understand how these texts should have suggested the introduction of unction into confirmation at an early date ; and how later writers, finding unction well established in the sacrament, should, in view of the language of St. Paul, have come to the conclusion that the unction of confirmation is of divine or apostolical institution. We are aware that many writers, relying chiefly on the authority of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, taught in medieval times, that it was so.

Turning from the New Testament to the Fathers, we find that the earliest known writer who is supposed to refer to unction, is Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch in Syria from 168 to 186 ; but there is some doubt if the unction referred to is to be taken literally. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians, and Theophilus gives the Christian interpretation of the name. Defending himself against the scoffs of unbelievers, he writes :—"And about your laughing at me, calling me a 'Christian,' you do not know what you are saying. First, because that which is 'anointed' (*χριστόν*) is sweet and serviceable (*εὐχρηστον*), and far from contemptible. For what ship can be serviceable and seaworthy, unless it is first anointed ? Or what castle or house is beautiful and serviceable when it has not been anointed ? Or what man on entering into life or into the gymnasium is not anointed with oil ? Or what work has either ornament or beauty unless it is anointed and burnished ? Then, even the air and all that is under heaven is, in a kind of way, anointed with light and spirit ; and are you unwilling to be anointed with the oil of God ? We, therefore, are called Christians

on this account, because we are anointed with the oil of God." ¹

Very little can be gathered from this. Theophilus argues throughout from the literal meaning of the word *Christos*, an anointed one, and from the use of unction in the ordinary affairs of life; but as he speaks of air and all that is under heaven being in a certain sort anointed by light and spirit, it may be that the "oil of God" does not refer to a literal oil. It may signify the word of God, in relation to the wonderful effects which it produces in the Christian soul. Though this may be, still we think there is question of a literal unction. But even though the reference were literal, there is no indication that the unction of which Theophilus speaks is connected with confirmation rather than with baptism.

St. Irenaeus mentions unction among other ceremonies whereby, among the Valentinian and Gnostic heretics, candidates were admitted to regeneration and the pleroma. Some prepared a nuptial couch and performed a mystic rite; others led the candidates to the water and baptised them with a peculiar form; others, to produce a greater impression, repeated over them certain Hebrew names. "Thereupon they anoint the initiated with opobalsam. For they assert that this unguent is a symbol of the fragrance which is above all things. But there are some of them who say that it is superfluous to take the candidates to the water; but they mix oil and water together, and, with formulas similar to those given above, they throw it upon the heads of those whom they are initiating and would have this to be considered the redemption. These also anoint with the balsam." ² Unction, apparently, was very common among all sections of the heretics.

Irenaeus, strange to say, never mentions unction as used by Catholics; it had been said even that he

¹ *Ad. Autol.* i, 12.

² *Contra Haer.* I. xxi, 4.

regarded it as a Gnostic innovation, which had not yet been adopted by the great Church. It is more probable, however, that the Gnostic practice was a corruption or parody of the Catholic usage of the time. This, indeed, cannot be proved from Irenaeus ; but the fact that men who were almost his contemporaries speak of it as firmly established, proves that the Gnostic practice was borrowed from the Church. Besides, though Irenaeus ranks it among the rites of the heretics, he nowhere speaks of it disparagingly, as an innovation or a corruption, though he devotes four books to the refutation of various heretical doctrines and practices. It is more likely, then, that the heretics took this rite from the Church ; but even so, we have no reason to connect either the heretical or the orthodox practice with the sacrament of confirmation.

The first who testifies to the existence of unction in the Church is Tertullian, who speaks of it in several places ; referring undoubtedly to a literal unction. But whether he regarded this as an essential element in confirmation it is not so easy to determine. In a passage quoted in the last chapter, he writes : " The flesh is washed, in order that the soul may be cleansed ; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated ; the flesh is signed, that the soul too may be fortified ; the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands, that the soul also may be illuminated by the Spirit ; the flesh is fed with the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may grow fat on God."

How are we to interpret this passage ? The unction of the second clause is real ; but does it indicate the use of chrism in confirmation ? We do not think so. Tertullian, most probably, is describing the chronological order of the different initiation ceremonies, and we notice that the signing is subsequent to the anointing. There is no indication that the signing was performed with

chrism ; in fact, from the way it is contrasted with the anointing one is inclined to believe that there was no oil of any kind employed in the signing. If so, what is referred to in the third clause ? Most likely the sign of the cross. Elsewhere Tertullian speaks of the Roman Church as "signing the faithful with water, arraying with the Holy Ghost, and feeding with the Eucharist,"¹ where he applies the word "signing" to baptism. If the unction is separated from the imposition of hands by the signing with the cross, it is difficult to see how it can form part of the sacrament of confirmation. Possibly the unction and the signing pertained more properly to baptism than to its complement, the two being integral ceremonies of baptism. The fact that Tertullian divides both the unction and the signing from the imposition of hands, ascribing the gift of the Holy Ghost to the latter alone, shows that he did not regard the unction as the essential element in the sacrament of confirmation. For him, the essential element is the imposition of hands.

From the effect which he ascribes to the unction :— "The flesh is anointed, *that the soul may be consecrated*," it has been argued that he must have regarded it as sacramental ; but it might as easily be urged that he mentions five sacraments in the passage, because the effect ascribed to the other four ceremonies is equally important, if not more so. Tertullian, not having fully thought out the efficacy of these different ceremonies, could scarcely be expected to speak with the nice precision of a modern theologian. It is difficult to determine the exact value which he attached to the unction ; it had the effect of consecrating the newly baptised, but it was not the means by which the gift of the Holy Ghost was conveyed. Here, as throughout Tertullian's writings, it is only the imposition of hands which can produce this effect. No doubt, the unction

¹ *De Praes. Haer.* c. xxxvi.

had some value in his eyes ; but it is more probable that it derived this from its connection with baptism rather than with confirmation.

Tertullian refers to unction again in his treatise on baptism, where he mentions only three of the initiation ceremonies. Immersion in the font was followed by an unction, and the unction by an imposition of hands. "After this," he writes, "when we have issued from the font, we are thoroughly anointed (*perungimur*) with a blessed unction. . . . Thus too in our case (as in the case of Christ) the unction takes place in the flesh, but is of spiritual profit ; in the same way as, in the actual baptism, the immersion in the water is a carnal transaction, but the effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from our sins. After that, the hand is imposed on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Ghost through benediction." ¹ Here, as in the former passage, the unction is a real one, wherein the oil runs down the flesh in a carnal manner. It is part of the ceremony of confirmation ? From the comparison between the immersion and the unction it has been urged that the latter must be sacramental. It is independent of baptism, manifestly ; its effect being so contrasted with that of baptism as to imply that Tertullian regarded both as of equal value. Without doubt the statement about unction is a strong one ; and, had we this isolated passage alone, we should be inclined to regard the unction as a distinct sacrament. This, however, is not without its difficulties ; for the imposition of hands is absolutely distinct from the unction, as can be perceived from the transition from the one to the other. Moreover, the unction, though of spiritual profit, has not the value of imparting the Holy Ghost ; this is the peculiar effect of the imposition of hands and of the prayer which immediately followed. Again, the use of the word *perungimur* shows

¹ *De Bapt.*, c vii.

that the unction was not confined to the forehead. It seems to imply an extensive anointing, either on the head, or on various parts of the body. It is as difficult to determine the exact value which Tertullian attaches to the unction in this case as in the last. The language which he used would, in modern times, convey a sacramental idea; but it is curious, that, though aware of the cleansing and preparatory function of baptism, he attaches no definite specific value to the unction, saying merely that it is of spiritual profit. All of which points to the conclusion that unction, in Tertullian's time, was not so prominent in confirmation as some writers assert. He himself, probably, would be at a loss to say whether it was one of the ceremonies of baptism or of confirmation. It is well to remark, before leaving Tertullian, that he does not regard unction as anything novel; it was a well established practice in the Church at his time.

Turning from Tertullian to St. Cyprian, we do not find any more explicit evidence to show that chrism was then regarded as essential to confirmation. Only once does Cyprian mention unction. Those who are baptised, he says, are anointed with consecrated oil; but, like Tertullian, his thought is vague as to the effect of this. "It is also necessary," he writes, "that the man who is baptised should be anointed; so that, having received the chrism, that is, the unction, he may be one of God's anointed ones, and have in him the grace of Christ. And the oil, moreover, wherewith the baptised are anointed, is consecrated upon the altar by the Eucharist. But the creature of oil could not have been consecrated by one who had neither altar nor church. So neither can there be any spiritual unction among heretics, since it is proved to be impossible for any consecration of the oil or any celebration of the Eucharist to take place among them."¹

¹ Epist. lxx. 2.

In this passage Cyprian refers to an unction that took place after baptism ; that is about all we know. Elsewhere, when referring to confirmation,—as he does often,—he always states that the candidates receive the Holy Ghost by prayer and the imposition of hands. He regarded unction, evidently, as a subordinate rite ; the imposition of hands being the predominant and essential factor in confirmation. We cannot say whether he regarded unction as belonging to baptism or to confirmation.

The letter of Pope Cornelius to Fabius, Bishop of Antioch, is not more definite. This document is preserved, in a Greek form, by Eusebius. Cornelius speaks thus of Novatian : “ What works, or what manner of life, did he rely upon, that he should lay claim to a bishopric ? . . . His coming to be a believer was due to Satan, who visited him and abode in him for a long time. While under the treatment of the Exorcists, he contracted a severe illness ; and thinking himself to be at the point of death, he received (baptism) by aspersion, if indeed such a one can be said to have received it at all. Moreover, when he recovered from his sickness, he never observed the other things which a man ought to observe according to the ecclesiastical rule, and was never sealed by the bishop. But not having obtained this seal in any way, how then could he have obtained the Holy Ghost ? ”

There has been much diversity of opinion as to the nature of the sealing which was neglected by Novatian. Some say it refers merely to the sign of the cross before confirmation ; some interpret it of the sacramental seal or character impressed by that sacrament ; while some identify it with the imposition of hands. Weighty reasons have been assigned for this last interpretation. But whatever view we adopt, there is nothing to indicate that the sealing was effected by unction ; so we cannot prove from this statement that Cornelius regarded consignation with chrism as an essential part of the rite

of confirmation. It may be that the sealing to which he refers was produced by the imposition of hands, or was some ceremony preparatory to the imposition.

Origen, a contemporary of Pope Cornelius, mentions the use of unction in Alexandria ; but, as in the case of Tertullian and of St. Cyprian, we cannot conclude that he regarded it as an essential element in confirmation. His references to unction are extremely rare. He mentions it, incidentally, in a passage where he compares the ornaments of the Levitical priesthood with the virtues which should adorn the Christian : " For you also are able, if you prepare yourself by your zeal and your watching, if he has washed you, and the word of the law and the chrismal unction hath made you clean, and if the grace of baptism remains uncontaminated in you, etc." ¹ Nothing very definite can be gathered from this, and the same holds of other similar passages.

We shall next examine the Canons of Hippolytus. It is a most interesting document, containing a vast amount of early Christian liturgy. Its date cannot be definitely fixed, and it is not certain that it is the genuine work of Hippolytus. Brightman and Duchesne place it anterior to the fourth century, and the latter thinks he finds nothing in it to prevent us from ascribing it to the time of Hippolytus himself. The ceremonies of initiation are set forth in detail. The time is to be about cock-crow. The bishop prays over the " oil of exorcism," and the " oil of thanksgiving," and delivers both to two priests. The candidate, with his face turned to the west, renounces Satan and all his pomps. The priest anoints him with the oil of exorcism. Then the priest immerses him in the water three times, asking him at each immersion if he believes in the three persons of the Holy Trinity, and repeating the form of baptism each time. The candidate then goes up out of the water ; and the priest,

¹ Migne, P. Gr., tom. xii, col. 481.

taking the "oil of thanksgiving," anoints his whole body, both his head and his face, saying: "I anoint thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Then the priest wipes the candidate, who is immediately clothed and introduced into the Church. There the bishop imposes his hand on all who are baptised, and prays, saying: "We bless thee, Lord God Almighty, because thou hast made these persons worthy of being born again, and over whom thou pourest out thy Holy Spirit so that those who have been already united to the body of the Church may never be separated from it by wicked deeds. Grant rather to those, to whom thou hast already given the remission of their sins, the pledge also of thy Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom to thee, with him, and with the Holy Spirit, is glory for ever and ever. Amen. After this the bishop signs the forehead of each with the sign of charity, and kisses them, saying: The Lord be with ye. (*Deinde insignit frontes eorum signo caritatis osculaturque eos, dicens: Dominus vobiscum*)."¹

Two sacraments are referred to in this passage, baptism and confirmation; each having its own attendant ceremonies. In connection with baptism two unctions are administered, one immediately before, the other immediately after, the essential rite. Both are performed by a priest with different kinds of oil, each of which has been previously consecrated by a bishop. There is a prescribed form for the unction after baptism; after which the candidate is brought into the Church, where the bishop imposes hands on him while saying a special prayer. There is a well-marked division between this latter ceremony and those of baptism, the imposition of hands taking place after the candidates are introduced into the Church.

¹ Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, Fourth English Edition, App. 6, n. 112-140.

So far the meaning is clear enough. The difficulty arises with the last sentence: "Then the bishop signs each of them on the forehead with the sign of charity, and kisses them, saying: '*Dominus vobiscum.*'" Does he sign with oil or chrism? As far as we can see, there is nothing to show that he does; the contrary, rather. The author gives a pretty elaborate account of all the attendant ceremonies; distinguishing between the two kinds of oil consecrated by the bishop; and explaining the different use of each. In case of the second unction in baptism, he mentions the particular form repeated by the priest. From one who has thus carefully noted the use of oil in these two ceremonies, we should expect that, if the bishop were to sign with oil, he would not only mention this, but specify the particular kind of oil which was to be used. Again, though a form is prescribed for the priest's second unction, there is none for the bishop's signing; for, obviously, the "*Dominus vobiscum*" is a parting salutation accompanying the bishop's kiss. If, however, this ceremony is not a signing with chrism, what is it? It is most probably the sign of the cross. When we remember that the sign of the cross was in constant use among the early Christians, even as an accompaniment of the commonest actions of life, we need not be surprised to find the Canons of Hippolytus prescribing its use in the confirmation ceremony.

— We have now examined the evidence of the first three centuries; and have seen that the use of unction was prevalent in the Church in the third century, and that even in the early part of that century it did not seem to be of recent introduction. We have found, at the same time, that, as far as the evidence goes, there is no well grounded reason for the assertion that at this early period unction was an essential part of the confirmation ceremony proper, or that it was in vogue in apostolic times

as an essential part of the rite. This could be strengthened very much by producing the many passages which undoubtedly refer to confirmation, but which always connect the grace of the sacrament with the imposition of the bishop's hands alone. If anyone wants to be convinced of this, let him turn back to the preceding chapter. As far as I know, there is not a single passage in the literature of the first three centuries in which the gift of the Holy Ghost is attributed to chrism; though there are numerous passages wherein it is ascribed to the imposition.

Passing from the third to the fourth century, we notice a change with regard to chrism; especially during the second half of the century. The writers of the time who mention unction regard it as sacramental and as constituting an essential part of the sacrament of confirmation. It is so with St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who sees in the unction administered to neophytes after baptism a figure of the Holy Ghost. "And to you also, when you had come up from the pool of the sacred font, was given an unction, the figure of that with which Christ was anointed; and that is the Holy Ghost. . . . For Christ was not anointed by men with material oil or unguent; but the Father, having destined him to be the Saviour of the whole world, anointed him with the Holy Ghost." Later on he writes: "But see that you do not imagine that unguent to be mere unguent. For, as the bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Ghost, is no longer mere bread, but Christ's Body; so also this holy unguent is no longer mere unguent, or, as one might say, common unguent, after the invocation; but is the gift of Christ, and is made effectual to convey the Holy Ghost, by the presence of his own Godhead. And this unguent is symbolically applied to your forehead and your other organs of sense. And while your body is anointed with the visible ointment, your

soul is sanctified by the Holy and Lifegiving Spirit.”¹ This is a manifest reference to confirmation. The oil is compared with the Eucharist—a fact in itself significant—and then the oil both symbolizes and imparts the Holy Ghost. It is very remarkable that Cyril makes no mention of imposition of hands in confirmation ; though he devotes a special catechesis to chrism ; nor can we infer from other parts of his writings whether he was acquainted with that ceremony as a living rite. In his sixteenth catechesis it is represented as the means whereby Peter bestowed the Spirit ; but Cyril purposely refrains in that catechesis from explaining the method of bestowal then in use. “ You see everywhere the type, in the Old Testament and in the New the same. In Moses’ time the Spirit was given through the imposition of hands ; and Peter bestows the Spirit by an imposition of hands ; and upon you also who are undergoing baptism, the grace is about to come, though I do not tell you how, for I do not forestall the time.”² Strange that, when he does tell how, he mentions chrism, but no imposition.

We have also the testimony of St. Pacian, Bishop of Barcelona, who was a contemporary of St. Cyril ; Pacian wrote three letters against Sempronian, a Novatian, who had denied the Church’s power of forgiving sins. According to the Novatians, the words of Christ gave this power to the apostles alone, and it was not transmitted to their successors. Against this Pacian argues from analogy : “ Was this power allowed only to the apostles ? Then to them only was it allowed to baptise, and to give the Holy Ghost, and to cleanse the sins of the Gentiles ; for none but the apostles were bidden to do this. . . . If, therefore, the power both of baptising and of chrism, which are by far the greater spiritual gifts, has descended to the bishops from the apostles, then by

¹ Migne, P. G., tom. xxxiii, col. 1087-1092.

² *Ib.*, col. 955.

the same right have the bishops the power of binding and of loosing." ¹ The power of baptising is set over against the power of chrism as a distinct spiritual gift, and both are contrasted with the power of binding and loosing. This is in itself suggestive; and the further implication, that the chrism bestows the Holy Ghost, proves that St. Pacian regarded it as an essential element in confirmation.

The foregoing extract is taken from Pacian's first letter; but the same conclusion may be drawn from the other two. He asks the Novatians to show how their laity could have the Spirit, since they were not sealed by an anointed priest; and, when Sempronian had expressed a wish to be instructed, Pacian replies: "Would it were true that you are willing to be taught; for already I would confer on you with my own hands the very unguents of the Holy Spirit." ² This implies an intimate connection between chrism and the Holy Ghost.

The connection is made more explicit in Pacian's treatise on baptism, which gives a minute account of this sacrament. He describes how Christ, by taking flesh, had entered into espousals with the Church; and how Christians are born from this union: "From this marriage the Christian people is born, the Spirit of the Lord coming down from above; and, the heavenly seed being cast upon the substance of our souls, and forthwith blended with it, we grow up in the bowels of our Mother, and being produced from her womb are quickened into life in Christ. . . . And thus the seed of Christ, that is, the Spirit of God, sets in motion the new man in his mother's womb, brings him to birth at the font, and produces him by the hands of the priest,—faith being the attendant of the bridechamber. . . . But these things cannot be otherwise accomplished, except by the

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xiii, col. 1057.

² *Ib.*, col. 1062.

sacrament of water and of the chrism and of the bishop. For by the water sins are blotted out ; by the chrism the Holy Ghost is poured upon us ; and we obtain both by the hand and mouth of the bishop ; and thus the whole man is born and made new in Christ ; so that, as Christ rose from the dead, we also should walk in newness of life ; that is, laying aside the errors of our former life, we should follow new manners through the Spirit in Christ." ¹

In this magnificent passage St. Pacian draws a clear distinction between baptism and confirmation. The former is the work of the priest, the latter of the bishop. Each conveys its own distinctive benefit in the process of sanctification. It is the function of baptism to wash away sin and to regenerate. In confirmation the bishop uses chrism for the infusion of the Holy Ghost. Language could not more clearly express the efficacy of chrism ; so that there can be no doubt that Pacian considered it an essential element in confirmation.

The same impression is gathered from another contemporary,—the unknown author of the work known as "*De Salmone*,"—which is sometimes falsely attributed to St. Ambrose. Expounding the passage in Deuteronomy : "And he made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the hardest stone," the author explains how this typifies what was to happen, in the Christian dispensation, when the Holy Ghost would be given by an unction with chrism.²

Besides St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Pacian of Spain we have the testimony of an African witness, St. Optatus, Bishop of Mileve, who wrote against the Donatists about the middle of the fourth century. Optatus extols the virtue of chrism several times. He equiparates it with the Eucharist in his condemnation of the sacrileges of the Donatists. He relates how, as the very dogs in madness turned on their masters who had thrown them the

¹ *Ib.*, col. 1093.

² Migne, P. L., tom. xvii, col. 696.

Eucharist consecrated by the Catholics, so the chrism was saved from profanation by angelic hands.¹ The Donatists used to quote Psalm cxi, 5, as a plea for refusing to receive sacraments from sinners. Optatus explains that this is the prayer of Christ, not of the Christian; and that the Son refuses to be anointed by any human ministry, since all men were sinners. "The Son therefore prays; let us see if the Father consented. This the Holy Ghost indicates and makes plain in the forty-fourth Psalm, where he says to none other than the Son, 'The Lord, even thy God, shall anoint thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.'" Optatus then proceeds to describe the connection between baptism and the anointing as having been exemplified even in the case of Christ: "When he had been baptised and was in the hands of John, the order of the mystery was observed; and the Father fulfilled what the Son had asked, and what the Holy Ghost had announced. The heavens were opened as God the Father anointed. The spiritual oil at once descended in the figure of a dove, and lighted on his head and spread over him, whence he began to be called Christ, since he was anointed by the Father. And, lest he should appear to lack even the imposition of hands, the voice of God was heard speaking from the cloud, 'This is my Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'" ²

As we know, from other parts of his works, that St. Optatus was well aware of the use of chrism at his time, can we conclude from this passage that he refers to its use in confirmation? He does not state explicitly that it belonged to the confirmation rite; though it may be implied in his words; as the anointing of the Son by the Father was a cause of the descent of the spiritual oil, that is, the Holy Ghost. Moreover, he does not tell us what he considered the special benefit of imposition of hands.

¹ Migne, P L., tom, xi, col. 972.

² Ib., col. 1039-1040.

The oil seems to be the most important factor ; for while it symbolizes the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, the imposition of hands seems to be only a witness to the Sonship of Jesus.

Another passage in St. Optatus seems to indicate the same conclusion. The Donatists had nicknamed the Catholics "dying flies" (*muscae moriturae*), and had accused them of tainting the sweetness of the oil. Optatus replies that the oil derives its virtue from the name of Christ ; that, when consecrated, it has a sweetness which softens the skin of conscience, makes the soul new and gentle, prepares a seat for the Holy Ghost, so that, being invited thither, he may freely dwell therein. It is the Donatists who profane the oil by their custom of re-baptising and re-anointing. Such a profanation is a sin against the Holy Ghost.

It is not easy to determine what value Optatus attached to the unction and the imposition, relatively. He is far more emphatic than his predecessors, Tertullian and St. Cyprian, on the importance of unction ; but not nearly so strong and definite as his successor, St. Augustine.

The document known as the *Apostolical Constitutions* is the last we shall examine. It saw the light in Syrian Antioch or its surroundings, and was probably composed towards the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century. It is a fusion of two kindred works, the *Didascalia of the Apostles* and the *Didache*, and gives an index to the Syrian usage of the period, chrism being mentioned several times. The teaching which it implies is in many ways peculiar.

In the third book, after explaining the need of deacons and deaconesses, and their necessary qualifications, the author proceeds : "First, in the baptism of women, the deacon shall only anoint their foreheads with the holy oil (*ἐλαίῳ χρίσει*), and after him the deaconess shall anoint them ; for it is not necessary that the women be gazed

on by men. But only in the imposition of hands shall the bishop anoint the head of the woman, as the priests and kings were anointed of old. . . . Thou, therefore, O bishop, in that manner shall anoint with the holy oil (ἐλαίῳ) the head of those who are being baptised for a figure of spiritual baptism. Then, either thou, O bishop, or a priest subject to thee, pronouncing and naming over them the sacred invocation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, shall baptise them in the water. But let the deacon take out the man, but the deaconess the woman, so that the imparting of the unbreakable seal may be performed in a becoming manner. And after this let the bishop anoint the baptised with the chrism (τῷ μύρῳ χρίτω). The baptism, therefore, is given into the death of Jesus; the water stands for the burial; the oil (ἐλαιον), for the Holy Ghost; the seal, for the cross; the chrism (μύρον) is a confirmation of the profession.”¹

The ceremonies of initiation here prescribed are curious in many ways. There is an imposition of hands, with unction, to be performed by the bishop. We should take this for confirmation, were nothing added; but the author clearly distinguishes between this and another unction, subsequent to baptism; the latter alone belonging to confirmation, as is plain. There are even two kinds of oil; one, called ἐλαιον, that is, olive oil,—for use before baptism; the other, for use after, called μύρον,—that is, balsam. Imposition of hands before baptism must have been common in Syria, as we find references to it in many later writings. The author’s symbolism is out of harmony with the received doctrine of the time. He seems to attach great importance to the unction before baptism, which “stands for the Holy Ghost.”

The foregoing passage is illustrated by another, in the seventh book, where the unctions are set forth with

¹ Migne, P. G., tom. i, col. 798, 799.

greater detail. After describing the profession of faith, the author continues : " But after this profession he comes in order to the anointing of oil (ἐλαίον). Now this is blessed by the high priest for the remission of sins and for a preparation for baptism. For he calls on the unbegotten God, the Father of Christ . . . to sanctify the oil in the name of the Lord Jesus, to impart to it spiritual grace and efficacious strength, remission of sins and preparation of the confession of baptism ; so that he who is anointed, being freed from all ungodliness, may be made worthy of initiation according to the command of the Only-begotten. Thereupon he comes to the water. . . . And after this when he has baptised him in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, let him anoint him with an unguent (μύρω), saying : ' O Lord God, uncreated and subject to none, Lord of all . . . do thou grant that this unguent may become efficacious in him who is baptised, so that the fragrance of thy Christ may continue in him firm and fixed, and that, as he has died with him, he may rise and live with him.' These and similar things let him say ; for this is the efficacy of the imposition of hands on each one. For if some such invocation is not made upon each one of those by the pious priest, he that is baptised does but go down into water, as the Jews, and puts away the filth of the body, not the filth of the soul." ¹

Here we notice the same difference of oil in the two unctions. A special form is given for the blessing of the oil used before baptism, though none is prescribed for the actual anointing. There is, however, a special form for the anointing after baptism, though there is none for the blessing of the oil. The unction after baptism, moreover, appears to be called imposition of hands (χειροθεσία). Is this because it is identical with the imposition ; or is it that one accompanied the other ?

¹ Ib., col. 1044.

We cannot say. Perhaps it may be a case of the survival of a technical term (imposition of hands), when the reality corresponding to it had disappeared.

The doctrine which underlies the ritual just set forth is confusing. To the unction before baptism is ascribed the effect of the Holy Ghost,—an effect which contemporary writers ascribe to confirmation. The second unction, after baptism, is the “confirmation of the confession,” whereby the “fragrance of Christ is made firm and fixed” in those who were baptised; but this second unction is not said to give the Holy Ghost; who is given rather by the first. This is even more clearly set forth in a previous passage of the same Book VII: “Now concerning baptism, O bishop or presbyter, we have already given directions, and we say now that thou shalt baptise as the Lord commanded us. . . . But thou shalt anoint first with holy oil; then thou shalt baptise with water; and finally, thou shalt seal with unguent: so that the oil may be a partaking of the Holy Ghost, the water a symbol of the death, and the unguent a seal of the covenants. But if there be neither oil nor unguent; water is sufficient, both for the unction and for the seal, and for the confession of him who died, or dies along with Christ.”¹ From which it can be seen that the doctrine of the author, as regards the efficacy of the confirmation unction, differs in many respects from that of his contemporaries. His influence, however, was not very wide.

¹ *Ib.*, col. 1012.

CHAPTER IV.

MATTER AND FORM IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

HAVING traced the early history of imposition of hands and of chrism in the ceremonies of Christian initiation, as presented by the writers of the first four centuries, we are in a position to examine the question of the relative importance of these elements in that early period. In terms of modern scientific theology, we ask: What constituted the essential matter of confirmation in the primitive Church?

When discussing this question we must bear in mind that none of the Fathers undertook to write a special dissertation on the subject, and that many of our modern terms would be strange to them. They were eminently practical men, who administered the sacraments of the Church, and confined themselves for the most part to drawing up instructions for the catechumens. The scholastic theory of matter and form was not yet applied to the external rite; so it is only by inference we can hope to determine which of the elements described by the Fathers would correspond with the matter of later days. Was it the chrism? or the imposition of hands? or both? We shall discuss this question first; that of the form later on.

Dealing¹ with evidence supplied by the Acts of the Apostles, we saw that there is no record therein of the use of chrism by the apostles; both the Samaritans and the Ephesians being confirmed by imposition of hands. The same holds of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Passing

¹ Chapter I.

on to the other books of the New Testament,¹ we did not find the use of chrism in confirmation so common that we could infer that its use in later times is a continuation of the apostolic practice. Had we merely the New Testament, we should have no hesitation in saying that in apostolic times the essential matter of this sacrament was an imposition of hands alone. Nor is there anything in the literature of the first two centuries which would compel us to modify that conclusion.

In the documents of the third century, moreover, we found nothing to show that imposition of hands had ceased, giving place to chrism. The evidence, on the contrary, goes to show that imposition of hands was the all-important factor in confirmation; while chrism remained in the background, with a location and efficacy which cannot be definitely decided. Tertullian and St. Cyprian in Africa, Firmilian in Asia Minor, the Council of Elvira in Spain, the Council of Arles in Gaul, the Canons of Hippolytus, and all the documents with which we are acquainted, are agreed that the essential rite of confirmation was imposition of hands. It is impossible, moreover, to accept the view that from the beginning there was no imposition in confirmation except that which necessarily attaches to consignation with chrism. The two ceremonies are unmistakably distinguished. In some places this distinction is shown by the transition from one to the other; in many by the difference of minister; and in all by the difference of effect. The imposition of hands was a ceremony absolutely distinct from unction.

The modern view, of imposition in the unction, seems to be advanced for a purpose—to make the matter of confirmation square with an *a priori* theory as to the power of the Church over the sacramental rite. This more general question we shall defer to our final review,

¹ Chapter III.

when we shall have examined the later history of the confirmation rite. Suffice it here to say that recognized theologians have no difficulty in admitting that confirmation has passed through two successive stages, in each of which the matter of the sacrament was different. We shall see this later on. Our present conclusion is that, in the third century, the really important element of confirmation was imposition of hands; such an imposition, that is, as is not found in the act of anointing the forehead with chrism.

If, moreover, it should be, as we have held, that confirmation was identical with the ceremony whereby those were reconciled who were baptised in an heretical sect, it follows immediately that chrism was not then part of the rite. St. Cyprian supplies abundant evidence as to the early stages of the re-baptism controversy; and there is not a single allusion to the use of chrism in the reconciliation ceremony. Nor does Firmilian, his supporter in the controversy, give any such indication; nor his antagonist, the author of *De Rebaptismate*. There is not a syllable in any of these which would point to the use of chrism. So far for the evidence of the first three centuries.

We have quoted abundant evidence from the latter half of the fourth century to show that chrism was then regarded as an essential constituent of confirmation. The testimony of St. Cyril and St. Pacian is convincing. From the evidence of these authors it might, perhaps, be urged that chrism must have acquired this prominence long before the middle of the fourth century and even before the end of the third. We should like to think so; but there are some difficulties. We have already seen how, in the third century, for Tertullian and St. Cyprian, it is imposition, not unction, which is predominant. How, besides, are we to explain the Councils of Elvira and of Arles, at the beginning of the fourth century? The former prescribes that anyone who, in case of necessity

has been baptised by a layman, is to be brought to the bishop "that he may be perfected by the imposition of hands"; which is the only rite that is contemplated, no mention being made of chrism. In another canon of the same Council, dealing with those who had been baptised when ill, without complying with the conditions of the catechumenate, there is reference only to the imposition. If, at the beginning of the fourth century, unction had acquired the prominence assigned to it by some, we should expect a hint to that effect. But no hint is given; nor in the Council of Arles, held shortly afterwards, which simply repeats and enforces the decree passed at Elvira with regard to sick pagans. It is difficult to see how, for either of these Councils, there was in confirmation a sacramental unction or any unction whatsoever.

Assuming once more that the reconciliation ceremony was identical with that of confirmation, we notice that, though unction is prescribed for reconciliation by canon 7 of the Council of Constantinople, there is no mention of it in the Arles legislation of nearly seventy years before. The reconciliation ceremony of Constantinople,¹ in which unction is prescribed, corresponded with the confirmation rite of the East.² It is curious that, when we find chrism prominent in confirmation, we should also find it introduced prominently into the reconciliation

¹ "Eos qui rectae fidei adjiciuntur, et parti eorum qui ex haereticis servantur, recipimus, secundum subjectam hic consequentiam et consuetudinem. Arianos quidem, et Macedonianos, et Sabbatianos, et Novatianos, qui dicunt se esse Catheros et Aristeros, (hoc est, mundos, vel sinistros,) et Tessaradecatitas, vel Tetraditas, et Apollinistas, recipimus, dantes quidem libellos, et omnem haeresim anathemizantes, quae non sentit ut sancta Dei Catholica et apostolica ecclesia; et signatos, sive unctos primum sancto chrismate, et frontem, et oculos, et nares, et os, et aures. Et eos signantes dicimus, Signaculum doni Spiritus sancti." Mansi, tom. 3, col. 563. The same method is prescribed by the Council of Trullo; cf. Hard., tom. 3, col. 1694.

² A slight difference will be indicated in the next chapter. The imposition of hands accompanying the prayer before consignation was still retained in reconciliation, while it seems to have disappeared in confirmation.

ceremony. St. Cyril and the Council of Constantinople were contemporaries. The Council of Arles in 314 makes no mention of unction ; whether in case of confirmation or of the reconciliation ; both of which were effected by imposition of hands to receive the Holy Ghost. This seems to show that at the beginning of the fourth century chrism was not yet regarded as essential to confirmation.

I find a view somewhat similar to this set forth by P. Bareille in his article on "*Baptême d'après les Pères Grecs et Latins*" in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*.¹ Speaking of the unction after baptism, he writes : " Did this unction, known to Tertullian, pertain to the sacrament of baptism or to that of confirmation ? According to the usage of the Roman Church at the present day, the person who is baptised is anointed with chrism by the priest who baptises him ; but when he presents himself for confirmation, he receives a new unction at the hand of the bishop. In the time of the Fathers there is no question of this twofold post-baptismal unction, of which one was a complement of baptism, and the other pertained to confirmation. The Latin Fathers signalize clearly the unction which immediately follows baptism ; but when they speak of confirmation, they mention no unction, but are content to indicate the imposition of hands made by the bishop with its accompanying prayer." Bareille then quotes the famous sentence of St. Jerome, " Neither the presbyter nor the deacon has the right to baptise without the chrism and the command of the bishop (*Sine chrismate et episcopi jussione, neque presbyter neque diaconus jus habet baptizandi*)"—a statement which seems to show that chrism pertained to the baptismal rite,—and continues : " St. Cyril of Jerusalem devotes a catechesis to the unction. But it is the only unction of which he speaks and it is manifestly that of confirmation."

¹ Tom. ii, col. 216.

What, then, was the essential matter of confirmation in the first four centuries? No simple reply can be given. As far as we can judge, from our researches, we are inclined to think that, for the first three centuries and the early part of the fourth, the essential matter consisted in imposition of hands. We are disposed to think also that this imposition was altogether different from that which so many of the moderns find in the episcopal consignation with chrism. It was like the imposition in the sacrament of order—a real laying on of hands to which the word imposition could be appropriately applied, and not a mere signing with the thumb.

Does the same hold of the fourth century? No; not at least of the second half, for there is abundant and varied evidence that chrism was then essential. What, then, became of the imposition of hands at this period? Did it still survive as an essential part, or did it cease altogether? We shall see later on—in the next chapter.

It is with regard to the form of confirmation, however, the greatest difficulty arises. The Council of Trent has not defined anything about the form; but that prescribed by Eugene IV.,—which, in the Decree for the Armenians, is given as “Signo te signo crucis, etc.”—is in the indicative. This is regarded as essential by almost all these who write after Eugene IV.; and, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there was a widely accepted belief that this form with its exact wording had come down from the apostles. This, however, is not supported by the earliest records.

In the New Testament confirmation is administered without chrism; and, of course, without the form, “Confirmo te chrismate salutis, etc.” Peter and John bestowed the Holy Ghost on the Samaritans by *prayer* and the *imposition* of hands; and, as we have seen, it is far more probable that the prayer was the form of the sacrament; for it is the form which determines the

matter of the sacrament, and the apostles' prayer defined the precise object for which they imposed hands: "They *prayed* for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. . . . Then they imposed hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost." St. Luke does not give the form of prayer which the apostles used; nor do we find elsewhere in the New Testament any record of the exact words.

Tertullian and St. Cyprian are not more explicit; though the former gives us to understand that the prayer accompanying the imposition contained a petition for the Holy Ghost: "After this the hand is imposed, *invoking and inviting the Holy Ghost* through benediction." St. Cyprian is even less explicit; telling us merely that bishops imparted the Holy Ghost by *prayer* and the imposition of hands. It will be noted that both refer to a prayer, and that neither gives any hint of the use of an indicative form.

In the Canons of Hippolytus there is a form prescribed for the imposition of hands which we have quoted already in the second chapter. It is in the nature of a prayer, first expressing thanks to God for the baptismal regeneration of the candidates, and then petitioning the advent of the Holy Ghost and the pledge of God's kingdom. One characteristic of the prayer is worthy of note: it contains no reference to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which became the principal feature in the later Western Sacramentaries. It has been argued that the *Dominus Vobiscum*,—with which the bishop saluted the candidate when blessing him after the prayer,—is a reference to the form which accompanied the consignation; but we have already seen that there was no oil in the signing. The *Dominus Vobiscum*, moreover, is to be connected, not with the signing, but with the bishop's kiss: it was a parting salutation to the candidate.

The Ecclesiastical Constitution of Egypt, a document of later date, reproduces the principal details of the

Canons of Hippolytus, though the prayer which accompanies the imposition varies somewhat: "O God and Saviour, who hast made them worthy to receive pardon of their sins, for life eternal, make them worthy of being filled with your Holy Spirit, and send forth on them your grace, that they may serve you according to your will. For to you is the glory, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." This prayer, though couched in different terms, has a general resemblance to that which is found in the Canons of Hippolytus. Both refer to the remission of sins effected by baptism; both ask for the Holy Ghost; neither contains any allusion to the seven gifts. The same is noticeable in the Testament of Our Lord; where, moreover, the prayer is much longer and refers to the bestowal of the Holy Ghost on the prophets and apostles: "O God our Saviour, who, through thy dear Son Jesus Christ, hast filled thy apostles with thy Holy Spirit, and who, through the same Holy Spirit, hast given the privilege of speaking to the prophets, and who hast made thy servants here present worthy of meriting the remission of sins by the bath of regeneration, and who hast taken away from them every shade of error and the darkness of infidelity; make them worthy, by thy love, of being filled with thy Holy Spirit; granting them the grace to serve thee in truth, O God, according to thy holy will, and to fulfil thy precepts in holiness; so that, being always faithful to thy will, through thee and through thy dear Son Jesus Christ, per quem tibi gloria et imperium cum Spiritu Sancto in saecula saeculorum." ¹

We find the seven gifts mentioned in the "De Sacramentis," which belongs most probably to the fourth century, and has been sometimes ascribed to St. Ambrose. The context, however, is rather meagre and the reference cryptic. After describing the unction at baptism, the

¹ *Test. Dom. Nos. Jesu Christi*, II, ix, edit. Rahmani, Mayence, 1899, p. 131.

author continues: "The spiritual seal follows . . . because perfection is accomplished after the bath, when, at the invocation of the bishop, the Holy Ghost is infused, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety, the Spirit of holy fear; the seven, as it were, virtues of the Holy Spirit. And indeed all virtues belong to the Spirit; but these are, so to speak, the cardinal virtues, the principal ones. . . . These are the seven virtues conferred when you are sealed." ¹ We are not told that the seven gifts were actually mentioned in the prayer; and it may be that the author only applies the words of Isaiah, xi, 3, to the effect of confirmation. The seven gifts are mentioned also by St. Ambrose ² and St. Augustine, ³ and always find a place in later Western Sacramentaries. We do not know, however, at what precise time they were first mentioned thus, expressly.

The same holds of the word "Septiform," which is applied to the Holy Ghost in the modern Western Pontificals. St. Hilary of Poitiers, ⁴ who died about 366, calls the seven gifts the *Septiforme munus*; and this epithet was adopted by Jerome ⁵ and Cassien ⁶; but we do not know if it had by this time found a place in the sacramental rite.

We find no trace of the indicative form for the unction in the West; not even in the fourth century, when chrism had become essential matter. In the East, however, St. Cyril of Jerusalem mentions the form of unction which, with a slight modification, was to prevail in most of the Eastern Churches. He speaks of "the seal of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (*σφραγὶς τῆς κοινωνίας τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος*)."

This is almost identical with the form prescribed by canon 7 of the Council of Constantinople; but the Greek

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xvi, col. 434.

² *Ib.*, tom. xxxix, col. 1524.

³ *Ib.*, tom. xxi, col. 1222.

⁴ *Ib.*, col. 403.

⁵ *Ib.*, tom. ix, col. 1007.

⁶ *Ib.*, tom. xlix, col. 866.

word *κοινωνίας* is replaced by *δωρεᾶς*. In the modern self-styled Orthodox Church, the form is: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost."

A different form seems to have been employed in Syria. The Apostolic Constitutions, as we have seen, prescribe a lengthy form for the anointing after baptism; but, strange to say, there is no mention of the Holy Ghost. In this respect, however, as in many others, the document is not a high authority, as it is to the unction before baptism it ascribes the gift of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER V.

THE LATER PATRISTIC PERIOD.

WE have seen that towards the close of the fourth century chrism was universally regarded as an essential element in the rite of confirmation ; and it is natural to ask what place was then occupied by imposition of hands. We shall first deal with the usage of the West, then with that of the East ; and we shall finally devote a section to the later history of the reconciliation ceremony.

SECTION I.—THE WEST.

If we were dependent on the writings of Innocent I. alone, we should be inclined to infer that imposition of hands had ceased at the beginning of the fifth century ; but the testimony of later writers shows clearly that it was then in use.

In an Epistle written to Decentius, Bishop of Eugubio, Innocent says : " As regards the sealing of infants, it is manifest that the bishop alone can lawfully perform the ceremony. For presbyters, though priests of the second rank, have not the perfection of the pontificate. That it is the function of the bishop alone either to seal, or to bestow (*ut vel consignet, vel tradant*) the Spirit, the Paraclete, is clear not only from ecclesiastical usage, but from that portion of the Acts of the Apostles which asserts that Peter and John were sent to give the Holy Ghost to those who had been already baptised. For when presbyters baptise, whether in the presence or in the

absence of the bishop, they may anoint the baptised with chrism, provided it had been previously consecrated by a bishop. They are not allowed to sign the forehead with the same; this being reserved to bishops alone, when they bestow the Spirit. The words, however, I may not name, lest I might seem to betray (my trust), rather than reply to the point on which you have consulted me.”¹

To understand this letter, we must bear in mind the circumstances in which it was written. Towards the end of the fourth century certain liturgical diversities had arisen in the Western Church; but, apart from special local peculiarities, they were reducible to two main types—the Roman and the Gallican. The Roman use was followed in Carthage; while the other type had its home in the countries of Northern Europe, though it had probably originated in Milan. Scholars are not agreed as to the extent to which the Gallican usage may have been influenced by the Eastern custom of allowing priests to confirm; nor can it be clearly determined how far the dioceses of Northern Italy were influenced by the Gallican ritual. At any rate, the priests in Eugubio seem to have arrogated to themselves the right to confirm; and Innocent I. felt himself called upon to protest against their pretensions. He recalls how the Churches of Italy, Spain, Gaul, Africa, Sicily, and the neighbouring islands, are under a special obligation of conforming to the Roman practice, since their evangelisation had been effected by St. Peter and his successors. In the Roman Church, however, the right to confirm was always reserved to the bishop.

Innocent calls attention to two unctions, both administered after baptism, with the same consecrated chrism. The first, or vertical, unction pertains to baptism, and can be performed by a simple priest; the second, or frontal, unction belongs to confirmation, and may

¹ Migne, P. L. tom. xx, col. 555.

be conferred only by a bishop. There is no mention of imposition of hands. Are we to infer that it had by this time become obsolete? The silence of Innocent is remarkable; seeing, especially, that he quotes the Acts of the Apostles to prove that bishops alone have a right to confirm. Imposition of hands, however, may be implied in the words, "when they bestow the Spirit"; a view which derives support from the fact that Innocent appears to distinguish between the sealing and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit, when he forbids priests, *either* to seal, *or* to bestow the Spirit. Moreover, he may have intended to denote the rite by the prominent characteristic of the frontal unction, without thereby intending to exclude imposition of hands. Nor does he necessarily ascribe the grace of the sacrament to the frontal unction alone. On the contrary, his statement—that it is reserved to bishops, "when they bestow the Spirit"—seems to suggest that the Holy Ghost is given by some ceremony to which the frontal unction is attached.

St. Jerome, who wrote shortly before Innocent, shows that hands were then imposed at confirmation. In his Dialogue against the Luciferians,—who had refused to communicate with some bishops who had lapsed during the Arian persecutions,—the sacrament of confirmation is referred to; and a few extracts will show what the writer held with regard to imposition of hands.

The Luciferian objects: "Do you not know that this is the custom of the Churches, that hands should be imposed on those who have been baptised, and so the Spirit invoked? Do you wish to know where this is written? In the Acts of the Apostles. Even if the authority of Scripture were lacking, the consent of the whole world on the matter would have the force of law." To which the Orthodox disputant replies: "I do not, indeed, deny that it is the custom of the Churches, that

the bishop hastens to impose hands on those who, at a distance, in the smaller towns, have been baptised by presbyters and deacons. But . . . if the bishop imposes hands, he imposes them on those who have been baptised in the right faith. . . . But if you inquire here why he who is baptised in the Church does not receive, except from the hands of the bishop, the Holy Ghost, whom we assert to be given in a true baptism, learn that this custom is based on the account of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles after the Lord's ascension."¹

This explanation, of the place of confirmation in the Church, is forced on St. Jerome by the exigencies of controversy. The Luciferian states that a repentant layman is reconciled by an imposition of hands that confers the Holy Ghost. St. Jerome replies that such a ceremony is superfluous; for either the heretic received the Holy Ghost in baptism, or his baptism was invalid: "Therefore if the Arian cannot give the Holy Ghost, he cannot even baptise, because there is no baptism of the Church without the (bestowal of the) Holy Ghost." The Luciferian at once points out that even in the Church there is an imposition of hands after baptism, to confer the Holy Ghost; and Jerome is hard set to answer this. He does not advert to the fact that the Holy Ghost may be given differently, by different sacraments; and this defect in his theology forces him to say that confirmation,—the existence of which cannot be denied, in the face of Scripture and tradition,—was intended merely to recall the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles; being instituted rather to manifest the power and dignity of the episcopacy, than because of any inherent necessity.

It is strange that, while Innocent does not mention imposition of hands, at least expressly, Jerome makes no allusion to chrism. Had we merely the evidence of either, we should think that only one of these rites was in

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xxiii, col. 164.

use ; having that of both, we know that the two rites were then administered.

St. Augustine, the greatest of the Latin Fathers, makes this quite clear ; for he regards both elements as essential, and attributes the effect of the sacrament, now to the imposition, now to the unction. Writing against the Donatists, on the question of baptism, he says : " When it is stated that ' the Holy Ghost is given only in the Catholic Church, by imposition of hands,' our predecessors without doubt would have us bear in mind what the apostle says : ' the charity of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who has been given to us.' . . . For the bestowal of the Holy Ghost is not now attested by visible signs accompanying the imposition of hands, as was formerly the case, in order to edify the weak in faith, and to enlarge the beginnings of the Church. For who at the present day expects that those on whom hands are imposed for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost should suddenly begin to speak with tongues ? " ¹

We find similar statements in Augustine's Tract on the First Epistle of St. John,² and in his work on the Trinity ;³ the latter passage being of special interest. He is proving the divinity of Christ from the fact that he bestows the Holy Ghost : " How, then, can he be not God, since he gives the Holy Ghost ? Rather, how great a God must he be, who gives God as his gift ? For none of his disciples gave the Holy Ghost. They prayed that he might come on those on whom they imposed hands ; but they themselves did not give him. And the Church even now observes this custom among its rulers. . . . We on the other hand are able to receive this gift (the Holy Ghost), according to our own poor measure ; but

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xliii, col. 149.

² *Ib.*, tom. xxxv, col. 2025.

³ *Ib.*, tom. xlii, col. 1093.

it is impossible for us to pour it out on others. That this may be done, we invoke God over them, and he alone effects it."

St. Augustine here seems to deny the sacramental efficacy of the imposition of hands, since he appears to think the apostles were not qualified to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. That he does not really mean this would appear at once if, taking his point of view, we read this passage in the light of others, already quoted. To Augustine's mind, the Holy Ghost is given, and yet not given by the imposition. Not given, that is to say, by the imposition as principal cause. God is the primary agent; for God alone can bestow God and his supernatural gifts. The sacrament is a secondary cause, in so much as God has bound himself to produce certain effects when the sacramental rite is completed. The apostles and their successors in the ministry are God's agents. Apart from him, they have no power to impart the Holy Ghost. But when, as his agents, they impose hands, God, in virtue of his pre-arrangement, is bound to produce the sacramental effect.

It will be noticed that, with Augustine, the imposition of hands is identical with that which was in vogue in apostolic times. Hence, even so late as this, there was as marked a distinction between imposition and unction, as in the days of Tertullian and St. Cyprian. It will be noted, moreover, that Augustine attributes the efficacy of confirmation—its power of imparting the Holy Ghost—to the prayer which accompanied the imposition.

Turning, now, to his teaching on unction, we find that he attaches quite as much importance to it as to the imposition of hands. Thus in his Tract on the First Epistle of St. John,—where, as we have seen, he lays special emphasis on the imposition,—he says: "The spiritual unction is the Holy Ghost himself, whose sacrament is in the visible unction. . . . The sacrament

of the unction consists in the invisible virtue itself. The invisible unction is the Holy Ghost. The invisible unction is that charity which, in whomsoever it may be, will serve as a root which the burning sun cannot wither. All that is rooted is nourished by the heat of the sun, not withered." ¹ Again, writing against the Donatist Petilianus, he comments thus on Psalm 132: "In this ointment you would have us understand the sacrament of chrism, which is a most sacred thing in the class of sensible signs, like baptism itself. . . . Distinguish, therefore, between the most holy visible sacrament, which can be in good and bad alike,—in the good for a reward, in the bad for judgment,—and the invisible unction of charity, which is peculiar to the good." ² Here is a clear recognition of the efficacy of chrism in confirmation; as will be found in many other works of St. Augustine.

Summing up his teaching, we find that he regards both imposition and unction as essential and sacramental. It may, however, be asked, whether the two were really distinct at that time; or whether the imposition to which he refers may not have been contained in the consignation. It seems much more likely that they were distinct, though forming one sacrament; for otherwise he could not say that the same imposition was practised in his time as in the first centuries of the Church. Augustine does not give any detailed information as to the forms which were in use: he alludes to an invocation of the Holy Ghost that accompanied the imposition; and makes no mention in connection with the unction of an indicative form.

The successors of St. Augustine do not throw much further light on the history of confirmation. From his time, indeed, to the era of the schoolmen there was no

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xxxv, col. 2002, 2004.

² *Ib.*, tom. xliii. col. 342.

appreciable development in sacramental theology; ecclesiastical writers being content, for the most part, to reproduce the language of St. Augustine or of his predecessors; while the Councils of the time were satisfied with disciplinary regulations concerning the administration of the sacraments. There was no scientific analysis of the nature of confirmation; and of such references as we possess, some deal with imposition of hands alone; others with chrism; whilst many mention both.

A Council was summoned at Arles in 453 to adjust a dispute between Bishop Theodore and Faustus, abbot of Lerins; and the Fathers of the Council allowed Theodore the right "that clerics and ministers of the altar should be ordained by him alone, or by someone to whom he had given a commission; that chrism should be obtained from him alone, and that all neophytes should be confirmed by him." ¹ Again, Leo the Great, in a homily on the Nativity, thus admonishes the faithful: "Stand steadfast in that faith which you have confessed before many witnesses, and in which, having been born again of water and the Holy Ghost, you received the chrism of salvation and the seal of life eternal." ²

It seems strange, at first sight, that neither those who sat in Council at Arles nor St. Leo should refer to imposition of hands; unless, indeed, it may be said that Leo's "chrism of salvation and the seal of life eternal" imply two different rites. Both statements, however, are only incidental; and it may be that Council and Pope were content with mentioning some prominent characteristic, which, for the faithful, would denote the whole rite. That such references were sometimes made is clear from the Anti-Pelagian Commentary on the Pauline Epistles—a work composed in Southern Gaul towards the close of the fifth century, and sometimes

¹ Mansi, tom. vii, col. 908.

² Migne, P. L., tom. liv, col. 207.

erroneously attributed to Primasius, Bishop of Hadrumetum. Commenting on the Epistle to the Hebrews,¹ the author asserts that the gift of the Holy Ghost is obtained by imposition of hands; whereas, in his comment on a text from the Corinthians, he attributes the same effect to chrism. The mention of but one aspect of the rite does not imply the non-existence of the other. This will explain statements in many writers of this period. To quote another example:—In his History of the Franks, Gregory of Tours thus describes the reception of Clovis into the Church: “The all-powerful king, having confessed God in the Trinity, was baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and was anointed with the sacred chrism with the seal of the cross of Christ.”² There is no reference to imposition of hands; which was then in use, as would appear from the Anti-Pelagian Commentary.

In the writings of Gregory the Great we find sufficient traces of the double rite to conclude that both the imposition and the unction were then in use. Thus in his exposition of a certain passage in the Canticle of Canticles, Gregory says: “Balsam with oil is by the pontifical blessing made chrism, whereby the gifts of the Holy Ghost are expressed”³; while in a Homily on the Gospels, he writes: “Through us the faithful come to holy baptism, are blessed by our prayers, and by the imposition of our hands receive the Holy Ghost from God; and they attain to the kingdom of heaven, while we, through our negligence, move downwards.”⁴

The Gregorian Sacramentary gives rise to certain difficulties. Mgr. Duchesne, indeed, does not accept it as the genuine work of Gregory; though he admits that it contains a number of prayers which were in use in

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. lxxviii, col. 720.

² Migne, P. L., tom. lxxi, col. 227.

³ Migne, tom. lxxix, col. 478.

⁴ *Ib.*, tom. lxxvi, col. 1148.

Gregory's time, and even long before. As against this, many authorities hold that it is the outcome of Gregory's liturgical reforms, if not actually composed by him.

The Sacramentary gives a description of the ceremonies of initiation. The candidate makes a profession of faith, and is baptised. As he emerges from the water, the priest signs the top of his head with chrism, saying : "God Almighty, Father of our Lord, who hath regenerated thee with water and the Holy Ghost, and who hath given thee remission of all sins, may he anoint thee with the chrism of salvation, unto life eternal. Amen." Meanwhile the Pontiff, having returned to the vestry, confirms those who have just been baptised ; and, "coming to the children,—while the archdeacon holds the chrism, his shoulders and arms wrapped in a linen cloth,—with his hand raised over the heads of all, says : Almighty and Eternal God, who hast deigned to regenerate thy servants, both male and female, with water and the Holy Ghost, send forth on them thy septiform Holy Spirit from heaven ; the Spirit of wisdom and understanding ; the Spirit of counsel and fortitude ; the Spirit of knowledge and piety ; fill them with the Spirit of thy fear, and seal them with the cross of Christ for life eternal. Amen. Then the deacons ask the name of each ; and the Pontiff,—with his thumb, which has been dipped in the chrism,—makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of one, and separately on each." ¹

Is there an imposition of hands in all this ? Clearly some kind of imposition is signified by the words, "the Pontiff, . . . with his hand raised over the heads of all, says, etc." ; though it does not necessarily imply physical contact. The expression recurs in the Roman Ordo ² ; and it would seem from the text of St. Amand

¹ *Ib.*, tom. lxxviii, col. 90.

² "Elevata et imposita manu super capita omnium." *Ib.*, col. 348.

that at this period ¹ hands were imposed, first upon the men, and then upon the women.² It may be that the bishop first laid one or both hands on each one's head ; and then, extending them over all, recited the prayer which mentions the special gifts to be imparted—as is done in our present rite of ordination. The Gelasian Sacramentary,—which is fundamentally Roman,—describes a rite of imposition which is practically the same as that of the Roman Ordo.³

Turning now to the unction, we notice that the Gregorian Sacramentary, though prescribing a form for the priest's unction after baptism, gives no similar form for the consignation. This is all the more remarkable owing to the detail wherewith the initiation ceremonies are described. Yet the fact that the deacons were to ask the name of each candidate, seems to suggest the use, by the bishop, of some form wherein the name was introduced. It may be that the expression, "seal them with the cross of Christ for life eternal," which concluded the form for imposition, was meant to determine the nature of the subsequent unction—that is, to act as a general form. Or it may be that this clause was separated from what preceded, and was pronounced during the consignation ; as was certainly the case in the usage which the Gelasian Sacramentary represents : "Afterwards he signs them on the forehead with the chrism,

¹ The date of the Roman Ordo cannot be definitely determined. Probably it represents the liturgical usage of the eighth century. The same is probably true of the Gelasian Sacramentary.

² "Et surgit Pontifex a sede de consignatorio, et vadit in dexteram partem masculorum, dicendo orationem et tangendo capita ipsorum de manu ; similiter ad feminas." Cf. Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, Fourth English Edition, p. 470.

³ "Deinde ab episcopo datur eis Spiritus septiformis. Ad consignandum *imponit eis manum* in his verbis : Deus omnipotens, Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi. . . . Adimple eos Spiritu timoris tui in nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi, cum quo vivis et regnas Deus semper cum Spiritu sancto, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen. Postea signat eos in fronte de chrismate, dicens : Signum Christi in vitam aeternam. Amen." Migne, P. L., tom. lxxiv, col. 1112.

saying : The seal of Christ for life eternal. Amen." ¹ The Roman Ordo has a special form ; which, however, is so indeterminate that no specific effect is attributed to the unction. The bishop anointed the neophyte with the words : " In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Peace be with thee."

Whatever the form for the different rites may have been, it seems clear that the imposition and the unction were two distinct ceremonies, which followed each other in time, and formed one moral whole. It is not true that the only imposition of hands ever employed was that which necessarily occurs in the unction. There was a real laying on of hands ; which was, if anything, more important than the unction ; though the unction, too, by this time was regarded as sacramental ; as is plain from the words of Gregory the Great.

— We must not pass over some important documents of the seventh century. A Council of Seville, in the year 619, decreed that " it is not lawful for priests to give the Paraclete Spirit by imposition of hands to the faithful who have been baptised, or to those who have been converted from heresy ; neither is it lawful for them to prepare chrism, nor to seal with chrism the foreheads of those who have been baptised." ² Here, again, it seems incontrovertible that the Council regarded the two ceremonies, of imposition and unction, as distinct rites : the fact that it makes a prohibition with regard to both shows that the imposition is something more than what is necessarily contained in the unction. It does not, indeed, explicitly state that the unction is sacramental ; but, as the administration of this rite is reserved to bishops, and as writers both before and after the Council furnish unmistakeable evidence in this respect, we may be sure that those who sat there regarded it as sacramental

¹ Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 87.

² Mansi, tom. x, col. 559.

and essential. Shortly afterwards, the Fourth Council of Toledo, referring to the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, mentions chrism only as the matter of confirmation. It speaks of certain Jews who had been compelled to embrace Christianity, "and had been baptised, and anointed with chrism, and been made partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ." ¹

Isidore of Seville, who lived at this time, was a great collector of the intellectual treasures of antiquity; and was recognised by the Council of Toledo as the greatest scholar in Spain. In his liturgical treatise, *De Officiis Ecclesiasticis*, there is a chapter entitled "The imposition of hands," which contains the following: "But after baptism the Holy Ghost is given by bishops with imposition of hands; we remember that the apostles did this in the Acts of the Apostles. For so it is said: 'when Apollos was in Corinth, etc.' We are able to receive the Holy Ghost, we are not able to give him, but invoke the Lord that he may be given. I will add by whom this should be done, as Pope Innocent writes. . . . This is the right of Pontiffs alone, that they seal or bestow the Holy Ghost." ²

The sixth book on Etymologies contains this well-known passage: "Baptism, and chrism, the Body and Blood of Christ are sacraments. And they are called sacraments because, under the cover of corporal things, the divine power more secretly operates salvation under the same sacraments. . . . The word "chrism," in Greek, is "unction" in Latin, from which word Christ gets his name; and man is sanctified after the bath. For as in baptism the remission of sins is given; so by the unction the sanctification of the Spirit is obtained; and this from the discipline of old, wherein they were accustomed to be anointed for the priesthood, and on

¹ Mansi, tom. x, col. 633.

² Migne, P. L., tom. lxxxiii, col. 822, sq.

that account Aaron also was anointed by Moses. And while this unction is performed in a carnal manner, it is of spiritual profit; as in the grace of baptism itself, the visible act is the immersion in water, but the spiritual effect is the cleansing from sins. . . . And hands are imposed that through benediction the Holy Ghost may be summoned and invited.¹

These words of Isidore have been quoted by the advocates of rival theories,—have, indeed, been adduced in support of incompatible theories by the same individual. Thus it is said Isidore's imposition of hands is to be found in the unction; while it is also maintained that he attached the whole efficacy to the deprecatory form which accompanied the imposition,—which, if true, would imply that the imposition must have been anterior to the unction.

Had we the *De Officiis* alone, we might think that the imposition to which he refers was contained in the unction, seeing that he quotes Pope Innocent to the effect that bishops alone can *seal* or bestow the Holy Ghost; yet the second passage points to an imposition distinct from unction. For here, as one may notice, he reproduces the language of Tertullian; no doubt, attaching greater efficacy to the unction than he; for Isidore clearly maintains that the Holy Ghost is given by the unction. And though he omits the particle "*dehinc*" (after this), which Tertullian² employed to express the transition from unction to the imposition; it by no means follows that Isidore identifies the imposition with the unction. The particle was no longer applicable; for while Tertullian's unction preceded

¹ "Manus impositio ideo fit ut per benedictionem advocatus invitetur Spiritus Sanctus." Migne, L. L., tom. lxxxii. col. 256.

² Having described the use and the value of the unction after baptism, Tertullian continues: "*Dehinc* manus imponitur, per benedictionem invocans et advocans Spiritum Sanctum." *De Bapt.*, c. 7.

imposition, that of Isidore came after. In Tertullian's time the two were perfectly distinct; and, if they had become identified, it does not seem likely that Isidore would use the language of Tertullian to describe the whole ceremony.

Though the rites are distinct, they are intimately connected; for they make one moral whole, each part being essential. There is, however, a tendency—characteristic of the time—to regard the unction as the most important factor. Thus we find that Isidore denotes the whole rite as “chrism,” when contrasting confirmation with baptism and the Eucharist. On the other hand, little value seems to be attached to the imposition, apart from the accompanying prayer.

Note, moreover, that Isidore contemplates a true imposition of hands, and not, as a certain school of theologians have maintained, an imposition merely of name. The imposition of hands of apostolic times, they say, was replaced by chrism, which alone thereby became the matter of the sacrament; though the old name was still retained, since, through its associations, it more clearly suggested the sacramental effect. The theory finds a certain basis in the statements of those writers, who, like Innocent I., seem to speak of an imposition through unction; yet it cannot stand, in view of the unequivocal testimony of the Sacramentaries, conciliar declarations, and patristic documents.

The eighth and succeeding centuries were a transition period as regards the rite of confirmation. Though imposition of hands was preserved in many places, it seems probable that in others it passed into desuetude. If we glance through the ancient Pontificals which Dom Martène has collected with so much care, we shall find that imposition is mentioned in very few, though the prayer with which it was connected is prescribed in all its fullness. Here is a sample taken from the Pontifical

of Archbishop Egbert, who ruled the Church of York towards the middle of the eighth century : " Confirmation of men to be said by a bishop. How he ought to confirm. Almighty and Eternal God, who hast deigned to regenerate this thy servant with water and the Holy Ghost, who hast given him remission of all sins ; do thou, O Lord, send forth on him thy Septiform Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, from heaven. Amen. Give the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Amen. The Spirit of counsel and fortitude. Amen. The Spirit of knowledge and piety. Amen. Fill him with the Spirit of the fear of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and graciously seal him with the sign of the holy cross for life eternal. Here he must put chrism on the forehead of the man, saying : Receive the sign of the holy cross with the chrism of salvation for life eternal in Jesus Christ. Amen." ¹

Imposition of hands is not mentioned ; as it is not in four other Pontificals dating from the same period.² This holds also, to a large extent, of the Pontificals of the succeeding centuries ; yet so late as the twelfth the imposition is prescribed in a Pontifical belonging to the Church of Salisbury, wherein the rite is almost the same as in the Gregorian Sacramentary. They differ, however, in some important particulars ; for in place of the " *levata manu* " of the Gregorian, we read " *elevata et composita manu* " in that of Salisbury ; and while the Roman rite has no form for the unction, the English contains the words : " I confirm thee and sign thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." ³

Though the Pontificals of this period consistently omit all reference to imposition, we cannot conclude that there was no such rite in confirmation ; for in many of the same books we find no mention of imposition in

¹ Martène, *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus*, p. 249.

² The form accompanying the unction varies with the different Pontificals.

³ *Ib.*, p. 255.

the ordination rite, though there can be no doubt that it was part of that ceremony. Again, some of the Sacramentaries of the period, and many of the writers of the eighth and ninth centuries, explicitly mention imposition in confirmation. The Roman Ordo, as we have seen, clearly prescribes an imposition; and Gregory III., in a reply to St. Boniface, says that baptism conferred in the vernacular need not be repeated, but those who were so baptised should be confirmed by imposition of hands and by an unction with sacred chrism. Still there is good reason to suspect that, in certain districts at least, a formal imposition was no longer in use. This would seem to hold of England in particular; for when we consider the words of the Venerable Bede in conjunction with the English Pontificals, it would seem probable that the language of Bede is the outcome of a desire to find in the confirmation ceremony a rite of imposition which was no longer in use. He clearly testifies to the presence of an unction; for he reproduces the language of St. Augustine: "The sacrament of the Holy Ghost is in visible unction." He seems to testify quite as clearly to the existence of an imposition; for he relates how St. Cuthbert travelled round his parish "to impose hands on the recently baptised for the reception of the grace of the Holy Ghost."¹ Yet the imposition which he contemplates seems to be contained in the unction. For, explaining why Philip, who was only a deacon, was not qualified to impose hands on the Samaritans, he cites the words of Innocent I. in proof;² and again, commenting on the Canticle of Canticles, he makes the curious statement that "all the faithful, through the imposition of the sacerdotal hand, whereby the Holy Ghost is received, are sealed with this unction."³ We find a

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xciv, col. 769.

² *Ib.*, tom. xcii, col. 961.

³ *Ib.*, tom. xci, col. 1098.

similar expression in the Commentary on Psalm 26, which has sometimes been ascribed to Bede.¹ It would seem, therefore, as if Bede found an imposition in the act of unction; though it is not impossible to explain his language otherwise.

Alcuin, curiously enough, makes no mention of unction, though he twice refers to confirmation, and connects the sacramental effect with imposition of hands.² Is it a real imposition, or one merely in name? His disciple, Raban Maur, thinks it is chrism gives the sacrament its name and explains its efficacy; for through the secret virtue of chrism the Holy Ghost descends on the faithful. Then we find the statement: "Pope Sylvester laid it down that the power and privilege of consecrating chrism, and of sealing with the same those who are baptised, should pertain to the bishop alone,"³ as if for Maur the only imposition to be found in confirmation is that which is contained in the unction. May this also be what his master, Alcuin, meant?

Passing by writers like Aponius and Paschasius Radbertus,⁴ who attribute the sacramental grace to chrism and are silent about imposition of hands; as well as Magnus of Sens,⁵ Jonas of Orleans,⁶ and the Fathers of the Council of Paris,⁷ who make no mention of unction, while they ascribe the whole efficacy to the imposition; we come to the teaching of Amalarius of Metz.

This writer published in 830 a treatise in four volumes

¹ "Potest quoque (Omnipotens), si cui libuerit, illuminatio ad primam tantum unctionem, in qua simpliciter abrenutiamus Satanae; salus vero ad secundam. . . . Sciendum autem quod *illa unctio quae fit per manus impositionem ab episcopis*, quasi alia a duobus praedictis, et vulgo confirmatio dicitur, eadem est cum secunda, propter arrogantiam tamen non concessa est singulis sacerdotibus, sicut et multa alia." Migne, P. L. tom. xciii, col. 614.

² Migne, P. L., tom. ci, col. 261, 614.

³ Migne, P. L., tom. cvii, col. 313.

⁴ Migne, P. L., tom. cxx, col. 1275.

⁵ Migne, P. L., tom. cii, col. 98.

⁶ Ib., tom. cvi, col. 134.

⁷ Mansi. tom. xiv, col. 556.

entitled "*De Officiis Ecclesiasticis*," which is a commentary on certain liturgical ceremonies—among others, the rite of initiation. He makes extensive use of a Roman Ordo, which he frequently cites as an important authority. Dealing with the ceremonies of initiation, he proves the necessity of the vertical unction; and, having given the accompanying form, comes to the bishop's part of the rite. The prayer of the Gregorian Sacramentary is set forth, but in the singular number, as if it were said over each candidate; and though there is no explicit prescription with regard to imposition of hands, Amalarius immediately asks whether a neophyte can possess the kingdom of heaven without such imposition.

It is not, however, easy to say whether this refers to an imposition which is distinct from the unction. With Amalarius the deprecatory form was the essential part of the ceremony; and its conclusion, which referred in a general way to the unction, was only a petition to God that the neophyte should not lose the Holy Ghost whom he had received.¹ Amalarius, moreover, says the Holy Ghost is given by imposition of hands and prayer,² from which it would seem that the imposition accompanied the prayer and preceded the unction. This seems to follow also from his statement that "the Roman Ordo, to which we have often referred, says: 'the prayer being finished, he makes the sign of the cross with his thumb dipped in chrism on the forehead of each, saying: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'" ³ Yet we are not quite sure if this is what Amalarius means. It may be that, even

¹ "Eum quem superius precatus est pontifex, ut mitteret Spiritum sanctum, in sequentibus petit, ut suscipientem dignetur consignare in vitam aeternam, id est, ut eundem Spiritum non amittat suscipiens usque dum perducatur hospitem suum ad vitam aeternam." Migne, P. L., tom. cv, col. 1052.

² "Et ut per manus impositionem et orationem detur Spiritus sanctus ab apostolica auctoritate sumptum est, ut in Actibus Apostolorum scriptum est." *Ib.*, col. 1053.

³ *Ibid.*

though "the Holy Ghost is given by the imposition of hands and prayer," he is at the time considering the rite as a whole—including, that is to say, the prayer and the unction. In support of which one might quote his words : "It has been derived from the apostles that the anointing should be done by bishops alone through the imposition of the hand." ¹ In view of these indefinite statements it is not easy to determine the exact nature of the practice to which Amalarius testifies ; but it seems more probable that he contemplated two impositions ; one being contained in the ceremony of unction.

Walafrid Strabo, too, seems to look at the matter in this light. The following passage, though long, is sufficiently interesting to quote :—"Some added to baptism an unction of chrism ; and that this was derived from an ancient custom no one doubts, since in early times baptism was wont to be confirmed by imposition of hands. We read that Peter and John did this in Samaria ; and there is no doubt that this confirmation pertained then, as it does now, to the chief rulers of the Church. Hence, in the canons, priests are often forbidden to consecrate chrism, or to seal on the forehead those who have been baptised, as this is the province of the bishop alone. The decrees of Pope Innocent and the statutes of Sylvester bear testimony to this. . . . Whoever shall have been baptised by heretics in the name of the Trinity, or by any other man in the lawful invocation of the same Trinity, ought not to be rebaptised, . . . but what was imperfect ought to be perfected by chrism and the imposition of hands." ² Strabo seems to identify the imposition and the unction, and not to have known any previous imposition.

We have, however, adequate testimony that even at this period—the ninth century—a separate imposition

¹ *Ib.*, col. 1052.

² Migne, tom. civ, col. 951.

was employed in many places. Thus a Council of Worms, in the year 868, once more forbade priests to confirm : " It is not lawful for priests to give the Spirit, the Paraclete, by the imposition of hands, or to seal with chrism the foreheads of those who have been baptised." ¹ Hincmar of Rheims, too, seems to think that imposition and unction are different ; for, distinguishing several impositions of hands, he equiparates that of confirmation with that of ordination. Again, in the work entitled " *De Officiis Divinis* "—which is sometimes erroneously attributed to Alcuin, though in reality of a much later date—we find a rite almost exactly like that of the Roman Ordo. The bishop first imposed hands on the candidates, and recited the prayer. Then he made the sign of the cross on the forehead with chrism, saying : " In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The period traversed in this section was, as has been said, one of transition. At its inception chrism had already been universally regarded as essential for confirmation ; but imposition of hands was still the predominant element. Gradually, the imposition lost the foremost place, possibly because it was indeterminate, and by reason of the multiplicity of purposes which it was made to serve ; while chrism came to be regarded as more important ; till ultimately it displaced the imposition. Not, however, rapidly or universally ; for down to the date which we have reached, the imposition was still in use in many places. The writers of the next two centuries are few and of little import for our purposes ; so, before passing to an examination of the scholastic period, we shall turn our attention to the East, and see what development the sacrament underwent there.

¹ Mansi, tom. xv, col. 871.

SECTION 2.—THE EAST.

Turning to the Eastern evidence, one notes that, though, as far as we can learn, the practice was the same as that of the West in the third century, it would appear as if in the East, from the time of St. Cyril, very little importance was attached to imposition of hands ; which, indeed, is referred to only in certain expositions of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The earliest Euchologia do not mention it ; nor do the writers of the period, except those who comment on that Epistle ; which is surprising. It is not that they recognized an imposition in consignation ; for no Greek writer, ancient or modern, suggests this. It may be that there was an imposition previous to consignation ; or that, though chrism had been substituted for imposition, the ancient name (*χειροθεσία*) still survived. There are difficulties against either view ; but let the evidence speak for itself.

Towards the close of the fourth century St. Cyril of Jerusalem describes confirmation as an anointing of the forehead, ears, nostrils, and breast ; mentioning also the form whereby this was accompanied. The absence of any reference to imposition is the more remarkable as Cyril devotes a special catechesis to this sacrament.

In the following century the Greek historian, Theodoret, commenting on the first chapter of the Canticle of Canticles, writes : “ Bring to thy recollection the holy rite of initiation, in which they who are perfected, after the renunciation of the tyrant and the confession of the king, receive as a kind of royal seal the chrism of the spiritual unction (*σφραγίδα τινα βασιλικήν μύρον το χρῖσμα*), receiving in that typical ointment the invisible grace of the Holy Spirit.”¹ Here the reference is, plainly, to

¹ Migne, P. G., tom. lxxxii, col. 60.

confirmation ; but there is no mention of imposition. Perhaps, however, Theodoret, like so many of the Western Fathers, was content to refer to what was then, in the East, the prominent element of the confirmation rite.

In the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, which had such an influence on the theology of the middle ages, there is no reference to imposition in confirmation. In fact St. Thomas, who regarded these works as genuine,—dating from apostolic times,—quoted them to prove that the apostles sometimes used chrism instead of imposition in administering confirmation ; holding, curiously enough, that, though the imposition mentioned by St. Luke bestowed the sacramental effect, it was not the matter of the sacrament.

One of these works of the Pseudo-Dionysius, “ The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,”—which describes the Church as the earthly image of the heavenly world,—contains valuable information about the initiation ceremonies. After a period of instruction the candidate presents himself to the bishop, who imposes hands on his head ; whereupon, a prayer having been said, the candidate turns towards the West, and renounces Satan three times. He then turns towards the East, and makes a triple profession of faith ; after which the bishop imposes hands a second time. The candidate then puts off his garments, and is anointed ; first by the bishop, with a triple consecration ; and then by the priests, who anoint the whole body. While the priests are thus engaged, the bishop blesses the font ; and, when the neophyte appears, he dips him three times in the water. After this :—the priests deliver him to the sponsor and author of his reception ; in conjunction with whom they clothe him with suitable garments and lead him back to the bishop ; who, after sealing him with the God-making ointment (*μύρω*), finally makes him partaker of the Eucharist.”

This, as will be noticed, is a detailed account of the material part of the initiation rites ; wherein imposition, though prescribed twice before baptism, is not mentioned for confirmation. The same holds of a subsequent section in which the author explains the symbolism of the renunciation, of the turning to the East, of the unction before baptism, and of the immersion. Speaking of the final unction, he says : " The perfecting unction with the unguent makes him who has been initiated of a sweet savour ; for the holy perfecting of the divine birth joins what has been already initiated to the Divine Spirit." Later he sees in the ointment a symbol of the Holy Spirit, whom it bestows.

Turning to the Euchologia, we notice the same emphasis laid on chrism, while there is no mention of imposition. In one of the earliest of these rituals, the Codex Barberinus, of the eighth or ninth century, it is prescribed that the priest, having baptised the candidate, shall pray : " Blessed art thou, O Lord God Almighty, the fount of all good. . . . Thou, O Lord, the kindly King of all, bestow on him the seal of the gift of thy holy and almighty and adorable Spirit, and the partaking of the holy Body and precious Blood of thy Christ ; preserve him in thy sanctification, confirm him in the true faith, deliver him from the evil one and all his wiles. . . . Because thou art our God . . . for ever and ever." Then the priest, or the chanter, says : " Ye that have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ." After this the priest anoints the neophyte with the sacred oil, making the sign of the cross on the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, and two ears, while he says the form : " The seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost." ¹

We notice a difference between the prayer before consignation and the corresponding prayer of the West. There is no mention of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

¹ Goar, *Rituale Graecorum*, Paris, 1647, p. 360.

It would seem, moreover, as if this prayer did not pertain to the sacramental form, but was merely preparatory, and had reference both to the Eucharist and to the consecration ; while in many later Euchologia,¹ it is separated from the unction by an interval so great that one cannot regard it as sacramental. Even in the Codex Barberinus the two are divided by the phrase : " Ye that have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ " ; showing that the prayer was a mere ceremony antecedent to the essential rite. We notice also that it was not accompanied by any imposition ; and later Eastern scholars have maintained that, during this period, in their Church, the essence of confirmation was merely consecration with chrism, accompanied by the form : " The seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost." Some Western theologians were so convinced of this that they denied the validity of Greek confirmations, on the ground that one of the essential elements, the imposition of hands, was not part of the rite.

From the Euchologia, therefore, and the ordinary writings of the period, it would seem as if confirmation was administered without imposition, in the East, from the end of the fourth century. Yet there is some evidence to the contrary, as we have seen.

Commenting on the passage : " Not again laying the foundation . . . of the doctrine of baptisms, and of imposition of hands," St. Chrysostom distinguishes three things, baptism, the catechesis which followed it, and imposition. Of the last, he says : " For thus they were wont to receive the Holy Ghost ; as it is said : ' When Paul imposed his hands, the Holy Ghost came upon them.' " ² This has been often quoted to show that imposition was in use in the East at the close of the fourth century, but I doubt if Chrysostom meant to convey

¹ *Ib.*, p. 358.

² Migne, P. G., tom. lxxiii, col. 78.

that imposition was in use in his own time, though he says it was by that rite St. Paul conferred the Holy Ghost. The same holds of Chrysostom's nineteenth homily.¹

Commenting on the same passage, Theodoret writes : " Those who have believed, abominating the evil savour of these (dead works) ; and, using penance, approach the divine baptism, and through the priestly hand (διὰ τῆς ἱερατικῆς χειρὸς) receive the grace of the Spirit ; and receiving in the divine baptism the figure of the resurrection, they await the general resurrection of all, and the judgment to come." ² This, too, has been cited to show that even in the fifth century imposition of hands was still retained ; but it may be that Theodoret refers to baptism alone. For he was a native of Syria ; and as " The Apostolic Constitutions " and the " Areopagitica " —two Syrian productions—point to an imposition of hands previous to the immersion ; it is not impossible that he may be referring to this ceremony. The imposition, moreover, though *following the approach* to baptism, seems to *precede* the actual immersion.

Theodoret, indeed, ascribes the grace of the Holy Ghost to the priestly hand ; but perhaps he contemplates that grace of the Spirit which remits sin,—and which may, as Chrysostom teaches, be given in baptism,—not the plenitude of the Spirit which is given in confirmation. Or it may possibly be that " the priestly hand " does not mean imposition of hands, either in baptism or in confirmation ; but merely refers to the minister who bestows the sacramental effect. This is supported by the fact that Theodoret attributes the grace, *not to the imposition of the priestly hand, but to the priestly hand* ; without saying that imposition was still employed, as when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written.

Gennadius, Patriarch of Constantinople from 458 to 471,

¹ Ib., tom. lx, col. 144.

² Ib., tom. lxxxii, col. 716.

has been also quoted in this connection. His writings, apparently, have perished ; so that it is very doubtful if the passage which is preserved in later *Catenae* is really his. Let us examine it, however, as it is given by Oecumenius, a much later Greek writer : " He [the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews] means that before those who come now for the first time to the faith we put the teaching concerning these things for a foundation, as it were ; urging them first, as is natural, to repent from works that cause death ; and, repenting, to believe in God ; and, believing, to be baptised ; and, in being baptised, to submit themselves to the imposition of the priestly hands for partaking of the Spirit, and, after partaking of the Spirit, no longer to doubt concerning the resurrection from the dead." Gennadius, further, warns his readers not to lead careless lives ; reminding them that it is impossible to receive the Holy Ghost a second time by imposition of hands.

It is difficult to say which imposition is here referred to. Does it precede, or is it merely incidental to the consignation ? Perhaps neither ; for, with the possible exception of Gennadius, no Greek writer regards imposition as part of the ordinary confirmation rite. Moreover, none of the early Euchologia mention this ceremony ; though, as we shall see, they prescribe it for reconciliation. It may be that, urged by the necessity of exegesis, Gennadius calls the rite employed in his day to give the Holy Ghost by the ancient name of *χειροθεσία* ; for, though chrism had been substituted for imposition, it was the same rite as regards the effect produced. If there was imposition then in Constantinople, the practice of the East was not uniform, as that rite had disappeared in Jerusalem and in Syria.

We need not dwell upon the evidence of Photius ; who, when commenting on the same passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, does not imply that imposition of hands

was still in use. He says that the Holy Ghost was given after baptism ; but he does not describe the rite whereby this gift was conveyed.

SECTION 3.—RECONCILIATION OF HERETICS.

When we examined ¹ the connection between confirmation and the rite whereby those heretics were reconciled who had been baptised outside the Church, we found nothing to show that till the second half of the fourth century reconciliation consisted of aught but an imposition of hands. Chrism was then introduced, and became the more prominent part of the ceremony in the East. Notwithstanding this development, the Church of Rome adhered conservatively to the ancient usage ; refusing persistently to countenance any change in the reconciliation rite, while admitting and sanctioning the use of chrism in confirmation. We traced this down to Gregory the Great ; who summed up the different customs, saying that the East received certain heretics by unction with chrism, and that the West received the same by imposition of hands.

This statement of Gregory's is not to be understood of the entire West. The Council of Arles, in 314, prescribed a mode of procedure in strict conformity with the Roman practice ; but it would appear that, owing to Eastern influence, the use of chrism in reconciliation became prevalent in Gaul and Spain during the fifth and following centuries. Councils and writers put this beyond doubt. In 441 the Council of Orange (Can. 1) decreed that "if heretics who are in danger of death desire to become Catholics, they are to be sealed by the priests with chrism and the benediction." ² Imposition is not mentioned, at least expressly ; but it may be

¹ Chap. II.

² Hd., tom. i, col. 1784.

implied in the word "benediction," as this term is often used of the prayer which accompanied the imposition. Be this as it may, both ceremonies are mentioned in Canon 17 of the Second Council of Arles; where it is laid down that heretics who come from the Photinians or Paulinists should not be rebaptised, but should be received into the Church "by chrism and imposition of hands."¹ The Council of Epaone, held in 517, testifies likewise to the use of chrism. Canon 16 allows priests "to assist with chrism those heretics who are ill and seek conversion unexpectedly; but let all who will be converted know that if they are sound in health, this should be obtained from a bishop."²

The Gaulish writers are in harmony with the conciliary evidence. Speaking of heretics who had been baptised in the name of the Trinity, Faustus,³ Bishop of Riez, decides that they do not need to be rebaptised, but only to be anointed with chrism. Faustus does not mention imposition; but other writers, almost his contemporaries—for instance, Gennadius of Marsilles—show plainly that it was in use. Besides Faustus, we have the testimony of Gregory of Tours⁴; who, in his *History of the Franks*, narrates the conversion from Arianism of various illustrious persons, princes and princesses; invariably stating that they were received into the Church by an unction with chrism. Even so late as the ninth century, Walafrid Strabo bears witness to the same custom; teaching—in his treatise, "*De Rebus Ecclesiasticis*"⁵—that whoever is baptised by heretics should not be rebaptised, but should be made perfect by chrism and imposition of hands.

Chrism was used also in Spain, but not so early as in

¹ *Ib.*, tom. iii, col. 774.

² *Ib.*, col. 1049.

³ *Migne, P. L.*, tom. lxxiii, col. 807.

⁴ *Ib.*, tom. lxxi, col. 293. 403.

⁵ *Ib.*, tom. cxiv, col. 958.

Gaul. The second Council of Seville, indeed, does not expressly mention chrism; as it merely forbids priests "to bestow the Spirit, the Paraclete, by imposition of hands on the faithful who are baptised or on those who are converted from heresy." But the decree should be read in the light of contemporary writers; and Isidore of Seville and Gregory of Tours make it clear that chrism was employed.

Turning to the East, we find that, though Firmilian does not mention unction, later writers assure us of its introduction. Thus St. Basil,¹ in one of his three letters to Amphilochius, regards it as an indispensable condition for reconciliation. Having been consulted as to how heretics are to be received, he reviews in detail the rebaptism controversy; he is aware of the decisions that have been given as regards the Cathari; he knows, too, that certain bishops do not accept their baptism; and, though personally inclined to side with Cyprian and Firmilian, he allows each one to follow local custom; but if heretical baptism is deemed valid, "let it be a fixed principle that those who come to the Church after this baptism, should be anointed by the faithful, and thus participate in the mysteries."

We have already submitted² the evidence of the Council of Laodicea, as also that of Constantinople. Canon 7 of Constantinople, though not oecumenical, had a wide influence, and crystallised the Eastern practice. It was inserted and confirmed in the canons of the Council of Trullo, and thus found a place in the oriental books of canon law.

The author of "*Questio ad Orthodoxos*,"³ who lived, most probably, in Syria towards the beginning of the fifth century, bears similar testimony. Being asked

¹ Migne, P. G., tom. xxxii, col. 664-669.

² Ch. II.

³ Migne, P. G., tom. vi, col. 1261.

whether heretics who return to the Church should be rebaptised, he says that unction with sacred oil suffices for their reconciliation.

Having seen, in this short survey, that chrism was of paramount importance in the East during the fourth and following centuries, we ask naturally if there was any imposition of hands. Firmilian and the Council of Nice give clear proof of its existence in early times ; but later writers never mention it. It had not, however, fallen into desuetude ; for three ancient Euchologia show clearly that it was still retained. In one the title is first given : " How those who return from heresy must be received in the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church." Then it proceeds : " We receive the Arians, and the Macedonians,—or the enemies of the Holy Spirit,—and the Sabbatians, and the Novatians,—who style themselves undefiled,—and the Quartodecimans, and the Appolinarists, when they give certificates and anathematise their own and every other heresy which is not in accordance with the spirit of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church of God ; and they are afterwards sealed or anointed with the holy oil." Then the convert renounces his heresy, and makes a profession of faith. After this, " the priest, imposing his hand on the convert's head, says the following prayer : O God, our Saviour, who dost wish all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth . . . deign to seal him with the seal of the divine unguent, and with the advent of the Holy Ghost, and with the participation of the venerable Body and Blood of Christ, etc. The priest then anoints him with the unguent in the same way as the neophytes, and pronounces over him the same form. . . . After this the convert communicates." ¹

¹ This description is taken from the *Barberini Euchologion* ; cf. Morinus, *De Poenitentia*, Liber ix, cap. ix, p. 637, 638. For the text of the *Cryptae Ferratae Euchologion*, cf. Goar, *Rituale Graecorum*, Paris, 1647, p. 883.

The other two Euchologia agree with this in substance ; and all, as regards chrism, are in conformity with canon 7 of Constantinople. There is a striking resemblance between the rite described above and that of confirmation in the Barberini Euchologion. The consignation is the same in both, while in the prayer which precedes there is a reference to the sealing and the Eucharist. The reconciliation prayer, however, has an express petition for the advent of the Holy Ghost—a feature not found in the ordinary confirmation ceremony. There are two other characteristics of the reconciliation ceremony: the prayer is accompanied by imposition; and has, moreover, a closer connection with the consignation. In both respects, as also in its petition for the Holy Ghost, it resembles the confirmation rite of the West. The method of consignation, however, as well as its accompanying form, is peculiar to the East.

We have already traced this ceremony in the Roman Church down to Gregory the Great, and have seen that chrism was not employed. Nor was it afterwards. Pope Zachary (741-752), in an Epistle to St. Boniface, writes: "Your holy brotherhood is well aware that whoever has been baptised by heretics in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, should not be baptised, but should be cleansed by imposition of hands alone." The Pseudo-Eusebius also writes: "We command that all heretics, who have been converted by the grace of God and have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, should be reconciled, in accordance with the rule of the Roman Church, by imposition of hands. The sacrament of imposition must be held in great veneration, for it can be administered only by high priests; nor in apostolic times do we read or know that it was performed by other than apostles." We find no reference to the use of chrism at Rome.

The Sacramentaries point to the same conclusion. The

Gregorian, indeed, gives no description of the ceremony ; but this defect is supplied by three ancient manuscripts. The title of the Petavian, which Thomasius edited at Rome, reads : " Blessing for those who return from Arianism to the unity of the Catholic Church." The following prayer is then given : " O Lord God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . do thou, O Lord, send forth on them the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety. Fill them, O Lord, with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, God our Saviour, through whom and with whom is to thee honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Similar prayers are prescribed in the other two manuscripts ; and in the Codex Siculus imposition of hands is mentioned as accompanying the prayer. There is a striking resemblance between this prayer and that which is prescribed for confirmation in the Petavian Codex.

A relic of the ceremony seems to survive in the modern Roman Pontifical. Under the title, "*Ordo ad reconciliandum apostatam vel hæreticum*," we find the following directions : " Then laying aside the mitre, the Pontiff rises ; and the candidate, approaching his feet, genuflects before him. But the Pontiff imposes his right hand on the candidate's head, saying : Lord God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . do thou send forth on him the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, from heaven. Amen. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Amen. The Spirit of counsel and fortitude. Amen. The Spirit of knowledge and piety. Amen. Fill him with the light of thy splendour ; and in the name of the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, let him be signed with the sign of the cross for life eternal. Amen." It will be noticed that this prayer is substantially the same as that of confirmation.

So far we have discussed only the historical aspect of reconciliation, without reference to the theological problems involved. In the case of some heretics the reconciliation ceremony seems to have been a repetition of the sacrament of confirmation;¹ for though there is some ground for saying that the Novatians did not confirm, the same is not true of the Arians and other heretics. No theologian, moreover, holds that the reconciliation rite of the present Roman Pontifical is confirmation, though many identify it in substance with the confirmation of the third century.

Baptism and confirmation were never repeated in the early Church, if it was considered that they had been validly administered already. The baptismal controversy puts this beyond question. St. Cyprian spurned with indignation the charge of rebaptism; he baptised converts, he said, but did not rebaptise them. Though the Church recognised the validity of baptism conferred by heretics, there seems to have been a pretty widespread belief that heretical confirmation should not be accepted. St. Cyprian, as we have seen, took advantage of this to charge his opponents with inconsistency; never tiring of pressing the argument: if you hold one as valid, why not the other? The belief that heretical confirmation was invalid lingered for a long time in the East, as also in the Gallican Churches. All are now agreed that an heretical bishop can confirm validly; yet this seems at variance with the belief and practice

¹ That the early Church reconciled by confirmation heretics who had been baptised in an heretical sect is admitted by many theologians; among whom are Maldonatus, tom. i, *De Sacramentis*, qu. 1, 2, *De Confirmatione*; Morinus, *De Poenitentia*, Lib. ix, cap. xii, xiii, xiv; while of the moderns may be cited Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. i, p. 112; Schanz, *Die Lehre von den heiligen Sacramenten der Katholischen Kirche*, p. 287, n. 6; Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien*, 1899, p. 327; Saltet, *Les Réordinations*, Paris, 1907, p. 18-22, 402-406; Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, English Translation, p. 208-213; *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Paris, 1908, tom. iii, col. 1049.

of a large part of the ancient Church. How shall we account for these different practices ?

There is the opinion of Maldonatus, that heretics cannot confirm validly. "The first effect of baptism," he writes, "is to make a man a Christian and a believer, and this can be among heretics. The special effect of confirmation is to give the Holy Ghost ; which all the ancients maintained could not be done by heretics. . . . Whether confirmation should be repeated, is an old question. I think a distinction must be made ; for it was always certain that confirmation conferred by Catholic bishops should not be repeated ; and about this all the canons of the councils are to be understood. But it was not so certain whether confirmation conferred by an heretical bishop should be repeated in the Catholic Church ; nay, I think it was repeated in the whole ancient Church, as it was not deemed true confirmation. This I gather from all the ancient writers who teach that those who have been baptised among heretics should not be rebaptised, but should be reconfirmed, when they return to the Church."

The learned Oratorian Morinus mentions this view, and says he sees no danger in it ; as the Tridentine teaching on the character of the sacrament need not be extended beyond the case where confirmation is given by a Catholic bishop. To the objection that, as baptism conferred by heretics is valid, so is confirmation, he replies by denying the parity ; as on this principle one could conclude that confirmation administered by laymen is valid, as is lay baptism.

The opinion of Maldonatus may not, indeed, be formally opposed to the Tridentine definitions ; as the Council does not teach expressly that confirmation, like baptism, is valid when administered by heretics. Still it is opposed to what is now the received teaching.

Chardon takes another course ; invoking the intention

of the Church. "If I am allowed," he writes, "to express my opinion on so intricate a subject, I will say plainly that in most Churches some heretics were received into Catholic unity with the same rites as those of the sacrament of confirmation. This also I say, that it was not this sacrament which was administered to them; for, when using those rites for the reconciliation of heretics, the ecclesiastical authorities did not intend to confirm them a second time, but merely to obtain for them the grace of the Holy Ghost, that they might be united interiorly and profitably to the body of the Church."¹

This solution, if admitted, meets the difficulty; for the intention of the Church, as that of the minister, can give the same material rite different values in different circumstances; making it now a mere ceremony, and again a true sacrament. There are difficulties, however, against it. It is strange that the same rite should be used for reconciliation and confirmation, and that under both aspects the same effect should be ascribed to it. Had the Church prescribed for reconciliation some of the penitential rites, or had it created a special rite, there would be less confusion. The evidence, moreover, does not seem to favour Chardon's opinion; for the intention of the Church is what her ministers proposed to attain, and in many cases this cannot be distinguished from what they proposed when administering confirmation to Catholics.

Pourrat, not content with these explanations, says that in early days the sacramental nature of confirmation was not yet sufficiently unfolded; and that, as ecclesiastical writers were almost exclusively occupied with the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas, the conditions for the validity of the sacraments were not determined as accurately as might have been desired. "The several instances," he writes, "in which the rite of confirmation

¹ *Histoire de la Confirmation*, Chap. V.

was repeated . . . belong to the same category as the repetition of the order that had been conferred by intruders and simoniacs during the early part of the Middle Ages ; and are to be accounted for by the undefined state of sacramental doctrine at the time. Here it may suffice to remark that confirmation was not repeated when considered valid ; that is to say, when conferred in Catholic Church."

As regards the reconciliation rite in the present Roman Pontifical, we must hold that it is not sacramental, despite its similarity with the old confirmation ceremony ; for there is no consignation with chrism, which is now the essential matter of confirmation. The same holds of the fifth century, for the same reason. Hence even then confirmation was not universally administered to converts from heresy.

But how are we to account for the imposition of hands and the prayer, so like what confirmation was at an earlier time ? Can it be that in the third century and the early part of the fourth it was the same as confirmation ; and that, when chrism became essential matter of that sacrament, the reconciliation ceremony remained unchanged.

It is difficult to determine the precise date of this development. St. Jerome ¹ seems to have been aware of the difference between the two rites ; but we cannot rely too much on him, as we do not know the value which he attached to the polemical arguments urged against the Luciferians.

St. Augustine was stimulated by controversy with the Donatists to examine more closely the nature of sacraments, and to ascribe their proper relative values to the two rites. He was the first to bring out the *character* of a sacrament as distinct from the grace. Baptism conferred by Marcion, Arius, or Eunomius, was a true sacrament,

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. xxiii, col. 161.

provided the essential form was observed ; but it had its full effect only when the subject returned to the unity of the Catholic Church. It should not, therefore, be repeated on a heretic, any more than on a Catholic who had been baptised while he was ignorant of some essential truths of faith. The same holds of ordination.¹ So also confirmation, which is administered by imposition of hands and unction and is distinct from the reconciliation rite ; wherein there is imposition of hands alone, and which may be repeated.²

Augustine's successors, however, who had not the same incentive to study the question, scarcely ever mention this distinction : and so they continued to apply to reconciliation terms which properly belonged to confirmation. This was confusing ; as it tended to generate the idea that reconciliation was the sacrament of confirmation. Even so late as 1581, many of the Fathers at the Council of Rouen held this view, as appears from discussion which they had on the proper method of receiving Calvinists into the Church. So difficult did the historical aspect of reconciliation appear to them, that they decided to submit the matter to Gregory XIII. to whom they wrote :—" As regards the decree concerning baptism conferred by Calvinists, there was a doubt whether, when those who had been baptised in this manner returned, all the ceremonies omitted by Calvinists should be supplied. The majority (*Plerique*) denied ; as they read among the ancients that those who return from heresy should be received by imposition of hands ; which they deemed to be the sacrament of confirmation. . . . Some (*Alii*) said . . . that this imposition of hands

¹ *Utrumque enim sacramentum est, et quadam consecratione utrumque homini datur ; illud cum baptizatur ; istud cum ordinatur, ideoque in Catholica utrumque non licet iterari.*" Migne, P. L., tom. xliii. Immediately after, Augustine says that bishops who had been converted from heresy were reinstated, but were not reordained.

² Migne, P. L., tom. xliii, col. 149, 193, 342.

was not the sacrament of confirmation, but a ceremony of absolution and reconciliation. . . . Others (*Alii*) thought the ceremonies should be supplied, with the exception of exorcism." ¹ To this Gregory XIII. replied : "Caerimonias baptismi supplendas esse, praecedente in adultis abjuratiōe haeresis et reconciliatiōe."

Commenting on the reply of Gregory, Witasse ² says the Pope, very properly, abstained from deciding the historical question, whether imposition of hands on converts from heresy was confirmation ; as that is a difficult point, which is freely disputed among learned men. Witasse himself is inclined to think the imposition was confirmation, though in this he is inconsistent, as he holds that chrism was essential for that sacrament. Otherwise confirmation would have two different matters in the Roman Church at the same epoch ; the matter of ordinary confirmation being imposition of hands and unction, that of reconciliatory confirmation imposition of hands alone. It would seem, indeed, that in the early centuries there is some foundation for the view that imposition whereby heretics were reconciled was sacramental ; but in course of time it ceased to be so ; and it would seem from Augustine as if the change had taken place before the fifth century. This change may have occurred at the same time chrism became essential for confirmation.

Before that,—in the third century,—St. Cyprian and Firmilian, as we have seen, understood the papal decree to refer to confirmation ; though it reads : "*Ut manus imponatur in poenitentiam.*" It is possible, indeed, that they may have misconstrued the words of St. Stephen, in order to charge him with inconsistency ; but this would not explain how, in later times, the reconciliation rite was supposed to impart the Holy Ghost ; nor how

¹ Hd., tom. x, col. 1264.

² Migne, *Theologiae Cursus Completus*, xxi, 1047.

in the East and in Gaul chrism came to be used in reconciling heretics. For chrism, as far as we know, was not used in penitential rites. So great have these difficulties appeared to some scholars, that they regard the "in poenitentiam" of St. Stephen as an error of transcription; and that he wrote: "Ut manus imponatur in Spiritum Sanctum."

If St. Stephen referred to penance or to some ceremony symbolical of penance, there is no special difficulty; but if he referred to confirmation, as St. Cyprian thought, and as many moderns think, it would seem as if the Roman Church rejected confirmation conferred by heretics; for St. Cyprian's argument against heretical baptism—"in the name of the same Christ the imposition of hands should avail there (in an heretical sect) to confer the Holy Ghost"—implies that the heretics were wont to impose hands. It may be, of course, that they had not the proper form or competent minister. Fr. Lehmkuhl¹ suggests that the Church may have deprived heretical bishops of the power to consecrate chrism validly; thus indirectly rendering their confirmations invalid. This we would accept, if we thought that chrism had by this time acquired the prominence which Fr. Lehmkuhl assigns it.

¹ *Theologia Moralis*, Ed. xi, Vol. II., n. 127.

CHAPTER VI.

SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY AND PROTESTANT REACTION.

SECTION I.—SCHOLASTICISM.

DURING a period characterized by great activity of thought, when men set themselves to co-ordinate the teaching of the Church and to find a rational justification for existing practices and beliefs, the sacraments could not fail to attract special attention. They had been administered in the Church from the beginning ; but, with the exception of St. Augustine and St. Isidore, very little attempt was made to give a scientific definition of a sacrament or to draw up a list of the rites to which the definition would apply. This was to be done later, in the days of the schoolmen. Contact with Eastern thought, as a result of the crusades, and the introduction of the Aristotelian philosophy, aroused the Western mind, and contributed no less to the development of theology,—of sacramental theology in particular,—than to the rise of the new scholastic philosophy. The theory of matter and form, borrowed from Aristotle's analysis of the constitution of physical compounds, was applied to the sacraments with more or less success. Not that any new reality was evolved, or any change made in the sacraments themselves,—practice here had preceded theory,—but the sacramental rites were viewed under a more scientific aspect, and a more precise and systematic expression of the practice was evolved.

Confirmation, like the other sacraments, received due attention ; its institution, matter, form, minister, efficacy,

being systematically discussed. Nor, amid general agreement on fundamental principles, was there any lack of difference of opinion as to matters of detail.

One main characteristic we may notice during the period : the imposition of hands previous to chrismation has lost its significance, and the whole sacramental value is attached to the second part of the rite. It is true, indeed, that some of the earlier writers of the period still spoke of imposition of hands ; but it is evident that they referred to the imposition which is found in the application of chrism to the forehead. Their contemporaries, moreover, make it plain that the sacramental value does not reside in the imposition which is attached to unction ; and many assert that chrism had been substituted for the imposition which was practised by the apostles. That rite was no longer regarded as essential ; and not only St. Thomas, but all the other great theologians of the thirteenth century, held that unction with chrism was the matter of the sacrament ; the form being the words wherewith that rite is accompanied : I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

St. Thomas, indeed, has been quoted as teaching, in his exposition of the sixth Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the imposition of hands was an essential part of the matter of the sacrament. "Imposition of hands," he writes, "is twofold ; one, which works miracles, as when Christ cured the sick by imposing hands on them¹ ; another, which is sacramental, and this also is of two kinds. One is found in the sacrament of order : do not impose hands hastily on anyone² ; while there is another in the sacrament of confirmation for renewal : by the laver of regeneration and of the renewal of the Holy Ghost.³ For in confirmation the Holy Ghost is

¹ Luke, iv, 40.

² 1 Tim., v, 22.

³ Titus, iii, 5.

given, for strength, that we may boldly confess the name of Christ before men." Later controversialists have relied on this passage to show that St. Thomas regarded the imposition of hands previous to chrism as essential; and as far as the passage itself is concerned there is some justification for this opinion. It cannot be maintained that the imposition which he mentions is a mere name for confirmation; as, from the distinction drawn between it and the imposition whereby miracles were performed, it is clear that the imposition which he contemplates is sacramental, belonging, like that of order, to the matter of the sacrament.

This passage, however, as we think, does not convey the mature and deliberate opinion of St. Thomas; for when he discusses the question formally, both in the Commentary of the Sentences and in the Summa, he shows plainly that he does not consider imposition of hands to be essential. So much is he convinced that chrism alone is essential matter, that he does not hesitate to deny the sacramental character of the imposition of hands of the apostles on the Samaritans and Ephesians. How far the passage in the Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews may have been influenced by necessity of exegesis; or whether the word "sacramental," as applied to imposition of hands in confirmation, may have been used in a loose sense, it is difficult to determine. The imposition may have been called "sacramental" in so far as it was bound up with the sacramental rite of chrismation; which, by itself, constituted the essential matter. This is also confirmed by the fact that St. Thomas, when treating the matter of order in the Summa, never finds it in the imposition of hands.

Though all were agreed that unction with its corresponding form was the essential rite of confirmation, the greatest diversity of view prevailed among the schoolmen as to the institution of the sacrament and the determina-

tion of its matter and form. Very often the same theologian is not consistent in his teaching. Many writers of the twelfth century,—among them Roland Bandinelli (Alexander III.),¹ Hugh of St. Victor,² and Peter Lombard,³—were content to state that confirmation was instituted by the apostles; but we are not told whether the apostles did so in virtue of a special commission received from Christ.

In the following century the fact of the divine institution of all the sacraments is clearly set forth by the theologians; but there was no unanimity as to the time and manner of the institution of confirmation. There were two opinions; the Franciscans maintaining that it was instituted by the Holy Ghost through the apostles and the Church; while the Dominicans insisted that confirmation, like all the other sacraments, was instituted immediately by Christ himself.

As regards the time of institution, there was considerable difference of opinion within the Franciscan school. Though, when treating of sacraments in general, Alexander of Hales clearly teaches that all were instituted by Christ himself, or by the apostles in virtue of a special commission received from Christ, he departs from this when discussing the sacrament of confirmation in particular. Seeing that chrism and its accompanying form are nowhere mentioned in Scripture, and being convinced that the matter and the form of a sacrament are unchangeable, he maintains that confirmation was instituted in the ninth century, by the Council of Meaux, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. "It must be said," he writes, "that neither did the Lord institute this sacrament, as it is a sacrament, nor did He or the apostles administer it. . . . This sacrament was instituted

¹ Gietl, *Die Sent. Rolands*, p. 213.

² *De Sac.*, II, par. 15. 2.

³ *Sent.* iv, 23, 2; cf. also, *Summa Sent.*, vi, 15.

at the instigation of the Holy Ghost in the Council of Meaux, as regards the form of words and the material element ; and it was the Holy Ghost also who gave it the power of sanctification.”¹ This extraordinary view was logically connected with his belief, that the present form of confirmation was not in existence before the ninth century ; before which the Holy Ghost, indeed, was given to those who were baptised, but not by means of any sacramental rite.

Alexander's disciple, St. Bonaventure, though accepting his master's view, in the main, modified it considerably as regards the time of institution ; which he put back from the ninth century to a little after the apostolic age. “ I believe,” he writes, “ that Christ neither dispensed nor instituted that sacrament. . . . Afterwards, when the successors of the apostles had been established, the Holy Ghost was to be given by means of words and invisibly ; therefore it was necessary that there should be a sensible element. On that account this element (chrism) was instituted by the rulers of the Church themselves under the dictation of the Holy Ghost.”² Bonaventure, however, seems to have modified this view in his later work, the *Brevilogium*, where he teaches that Christ instituted all the sacraments but in different ways : “ Christ instituted the aforesaid sacraments in a different manner . . . some by hinting at and initiating them (*insinuando et initiando*), as confirmation and extreme unction.”³

To reconcile these inconsistencies, some have said that what Alexander and St. Bonaventure meant to convey was that Christ instituted this sacrament immediately, but only generically ; which means that he determined the spiritual effect of the sacrament, to be produced by

¹ *Summa Theol.*, iv, qu. 9, m. 1.

² *iv Sent.*, Dist. 7, art. 1, qu. 1, 2.

³ *Pars. vi, cap. iv.*

some rite whereby that effect would be signified ; but left it to the apostles to determine, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, what sign precisely should be employed. This is to read modern concepts into medieval thought. There is no proof that Alexander or Bonaventure taught anything like this generic institution ; or that they conceived the sacrament to be instituted immediately by Christ himself. Later theologians, moreover, ascribed the theory of mediate institution to Alexander and Bonaventure.

The teaching of those early Franciscans never became popular, and it was either abandoned or watered down by the later theologians of the order. Duns Scotus, for instance, attributes the institution of confirmation, not to the Holy Ghost, but to Christ himself. " Concerning confirmation," he writes, " it is said that it was instituted when he [Christ] breathed on his apostles, saying : ' Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, etc.' I believe, however, that it was instituted at Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was sent to them from heaven, and they spoke in divers tongues. This is evident from the similarity of effects ; for, when the apostles confirmed others by imposition of hands, the Holy Ghost was immediately given from heaven, and they spoke in various tongues. Hence John XX. said : ' Sit you here, until you be filled with the Holy Ghost from on high.' Because therefore he breathed on them, this was the sign which he would afterwards give them at Pentecost, when he gave the Holy Ghost and confirmed them." ¹ It is by no means easy to extract from this the real opinion of Scotus as to the time and manner of institution. It is clear from the context that he regarded all the sacraments, including confirmation, as having been instituted by Christ, and not by the Holy Ghost ; but it is not so clear, as regards confirmation, whether he conceived Christ to

¹ Lib. iv, Dist. ii, qu. 1.

have determined merely the spiritual effect thereof or the matter and form as well.

The passage just quoted from Scotus is taken from a section in which he deals with sacraments in general ; but there is a special section on confirmation,¹ wherein, after stating that the chrismation with its form is the essential rite of the sacrament, he puts the difficulty that such a rite was not employed by either Christ or the apostles, who imparted the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands. The reply to this is interesting. It was not necessary or becoming for Christ to confine his virtue to the sacramental channels. Christ, moreover, arranged with the apostles that they should not necessarily use our sacramental sign of chrismation and its form ; because other signs then accompanied the administration of this sacrament, the Holy Ghost being given, in fiery tongues, to those who were confirmed. We must suppose, however, that Christ himself instituted the present matter and form of the sacrament ; even though there is no express testimony of such institution. The matter and form so determined was afterwards promulgated by some authentic minister.

Scotus, then, holds that Christ was the immediate author of confirmation, and that he determined the matter and form of the sacrament directly. In both points he departs from the teaching of his own order and approaches that of the Dominicans. As to the time of determination, and the date of its promulgation, he holds nothing for certain ; but the promulgation he seems to place some time after the death of the apostles.

If the earlier masters of the Franciscan school, while maintaining that Christ instituted all the sacraments, were sometimes forced to attribute confirmation to the Holy Ghost ; the Dominicans went to the other extreme ; and, to safeguard the institution by Christ, maintained,

¹ *Ib.*, Dist. vii, qu. 1.

in opposition to history, that Christ himself determined the matter, chrism, and the form which was employed in their own day. Both opinions seem to be founded on the general principle that to institute and to determine its matter and form were one and the same thing; and that, when a sacrament was once instituted, its matter and form were unchangeable. The distinction between generic and specific determination of sacramental rites had not yet been made. If, in dealing with the institution of confirmation, the Franciscans had not been consistent with the principles they laid down about sacraments in general; the Dominicans worked out a theory of institution which was doctrinally consistent, but which was opposed to some of the facts of history.

Albert the Great, the pioneer of the Dominican school, taught that Christ decreed that the matter and form of confirmation should be what in the Roman Church they are at present; and that the apostles administered the sacrament as it was administered in his own day. Albert, however, is well aware that this does not appear from the New Testament; but, in default of scriptural evidence, he relies on the analogy with baptism, and invokes for the use of chrism the authority of Dionysius the Areopagite, whom he considered to be a contemporary of the apostles.

Albert's disciple, St. Thomas, whose influence on theology was so great, deserves a closer examination. We have from his pen two formal treatises on the sacrament of confirmation. In the earlier of these,—that of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, written when he seems to have been much under the influence of Albert the Great,—he regards it as more probable that Christ instituted this sacrament when he imposed hands on the children, as St. Matthew records. The Gospel and the Acts, no doubt, do not mention the present matter and form; but, unless in case of a sacrament that is necessary

like baptism, the primitive Church took care to conceal such things from the uninitiated.

In the *Summa Theologica*, he modifies this view; holding that though Christ promised this sacrament, he did not administer it. In reply to the objection, that we nowhere read that Christ instituted confirmation, he writes: "Concerning the institution of this sacrament there are two opinions. For some have said that confirmation was instituted neither by Christ nor by the apostles, but afterwards, in the course of time, in a certain council. Others say, however, that it was instituted by the apostles; which cannot be true; as to institute a new sacrament pertains to the power of excellence which belongs to Christ alone. We must say, therefore, that Christ instituted this sacrament not by exhibiting but by promising it (*non exhibendo sed promittendo*), according to the text: 'If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I shall send him to you.' For in this sacrament is given the fulness of the Holy Ghost; which was not to be given before the resurrection and ascension of Christ, according to the text: 'The Spirit was not given because Jesus was not yet glorified.'" ¹

Comparing this passage from the *Summa* with that in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, we notice that in the *Summa* there is some hesitation as regards direct institution by Christ. In both works St. Thomas rejects altogether the teaching of Alexander of Hales; which in the earlier work he dubs an absurdity; because on that view the Church could institute new sacraments *ad libitum*. He rejects also in both the idea of the apostolic institution of confirmation; on the ground that sacraments derive their efficacy from Christ alone. In the *Summa*, however, he discards the opinion that Christ instituted the sacrament when he imposed hands on the children; and he is inclined to the view that the action of Christ was confined

¹ *Summa Theol.*, III, qu. lxxii, art. 1, ad 1.

to a promise of the sacrament, which he did not administer during his lifetime.

What, then, does St. Thomas mean when he says that Christ promised the sacrament, but did not administer it? Are we to limit the promise to the designation of the spiritual effect, or are we to extend it to the determination of the matter and form? We may find an answer in the articles on the matter and form of the sacrament, which follow immediately that which treats of its institution.

In article ii, he discusses the matter of the sacrament; and having laid down, in the body, that chrism is the essential matter, he answers an objection to the effect that the apostles were confirmed at Pentecost without any chrism, and that they in turn confirmed the Samaritans by imposition of hands alone. His reply to this objection is most interesting. The first part of the objection, concerning the confirmation of the apostles at Pentecost, he meets by explaining that the apostles on that occasion received the spiritual effect of the sacrament without the sacrament. Even so, however, there was something corresponding to a sensible sign, as chrism was symbolised by the fiery tongues; the fire signifying oil, and the tongues signifying balsam. "Even in like manner, when the apostles imposed hands, or even sometimes when they preached, the Holy Ghost descended on the faithful in visible signs, just as he descended on the apostles at the beginning . . . and, on that account, sensible sacramental matter was not necessary, where sensible signs were miraculously shown forth by God. Nevertheless, the apostles commonly used chrism in the administration of the sacrament, when visible signs of this sort were not present. For Dionysius in Chapter 4 of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy (near the beginning) says: 'There is a certain perfecting operation, which our rulers (that is, the apostles) name the power of chrism.'"¹

¹ Ibid.

How are we to understand this? One thing is clear: St. Thomas does not regard imposition of hands as having ever constituted the sensible sacramental rite of confirmation. Even when Peter and John imposed hands on the Samaritans, that rite was not the matter nor part of the matter of confirmation; but something extraordinary,—akin to what occurred at Pentecost, and altogether outside the ordinary administration of the sacrament.

It will be noted that St. Thomas does not clearly decide in this article whether Christ himself determined the matter of the sacrament; but contents himself with stating, on the authority of the Areopagite, that in administering it, the apostles sometimes used chrism. From which one might conclude that the use of chrism was suggested to the apostles by the fiery tongues under the form of which the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost; but such a conclusion seems to be incompatible with a statement in the second next article, on the form. This statement in question occurs in reply to the objection, that Christ did not institute the form in present use, since we do not find it employed by the apostles. Here is the reply: “By the ministry of the apostles, the effect of this sacrament, namely, the plenitude of the Holy Ghost, was given by certain visible signs miraculously worked by God, who can produce the effect of the sacrament without the sacrament; and then neither the matter nor the form of this sacrament was necessary. Sometimes, however, they supplied this sacrament as ministers of the sacraments; and then they employed both matter and form, *by the command of Christ*. For, in the administration of the sacraments, the apostles observed many things which have not been handed down in the scriptures that are commonly proposed; hence, towards the end of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy (between the middle and the end of the last chapter)

Dionysius says: 'Those who interpret scripture have no right to make public the perfective invocations (that is, the words whereby sacraments obtained their perfection), nor their mystical meaning, or the virtue worked through them by God; but, without any show (that is, secretly), our sacred tradition teaches them.'"¹ It may be, however, that the command of Christ, which St. Thomas here mentions, refers to the necessity of employing a suitable matter and form, rather than to the determination of the actual matter and form by Christ himself.

In view of the silence of the New Testament, St. Thomas, in his earlier work, seems to waver between two opinions on the determination of the matter of confirmation. "According to one opinion," he writes, "these things which pertain to this sacrament had not been instituted before the ascension of Christ. . . . Nor does it make any difference whether the Lord himself was the institutor or the apostles, by his special command. According to another opinion, however, it must be said that the Lord in his own person instituted the matter of the sacrament, as he also promised the advent of the Holy Ghost; but he left its proclamation to the apostles at the time when the use of the sacrament was called for, namely, after the Holy Ghost was fully sent."² It is difficult to say which of these views was finally adopted; but it is more probable it was that which held that Christ had commanded, not merely the use of some matter and form, but the use of the matter and form which was common in his own day.

This at least is certain: St. Thomas always teaches that Christ himself was the author of confirmation; and that the apostles did not confirm by imposition of hands, but by chrism, which they commonly employed. He never seems to have modified this latter opinion in the least.

¹ *Ibid.*, art. iv, ad 1.

² *Dist.* vii, art. ii.

He was particularly unfortunate in the historical authorities on which he relied ; being convinced that the writings which were current under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite were a genuine product of the apostolic age.

Despite the fact that Albert the Great, St. Thomas, and some of their later followers, advocated the use of chrism by the apostles in administering confirmation, this opinion does not seem to have many advocates among the schoolmen as a whole. All were convinced that chrism was the essential matter, but the great bulk of them seem to follow the earlier teaching of Honorius of Autun, who held that, while chrism was of apostolic institution, it was not employed by the apostles themselves. "Those who are baptised," writes Honorius, "are twice anointed with chrism ; first, by a priest, in baptism, but on the head ; then by a bishop, in confirmation, but on the forehead. . . . The apostles formerly administered this confirmation by imposition of hands alone ; their successors, according to their tradition, by consecration of chrism."¹ It is remarkable how few of the later theologians attributed to Christ himself the direct institution of chrism. In one form or other the opinion of Honorius prevailed in the schools in later days.

This opinion is important from another point of view. Evidently Honorius regarded the chrismation as the only essential matter in the confirmation rite, and sought to find a explanation of the apostolic imposition of hands. The fact that he considered it necessary to seek for such an explanation proves that the imposition of hands, which had been an essential element in the

¹ " Bis baptizati chrismate liniuntur ; semel a presbytero in baptismo et in capite, secundo ab episcopo in confirmatione et in fronte. . . Hanc confirmationem fecerunt olim apostoli per manus tantum impositionem ; illorum posterī, eis tamen tradentibus, per chrismatis consecrationem " *Gemma Animae*, Lib. III, cap. cxiv.

early Church, had by this time altogether lost its significance and was relegated to the rank of a mere ceremony. We have seen how the latter schoolmen were inclined to deny that the imposition of hands, which is mentioned by St. Luke, was matter of the sacrament even in the time of the apostles. This was largely due to an *a priori* view which they held as to the Church's power of making an essential change in any truly sacramental rite ; which in turn was due to their lack of acquaintance with the facts of history.

To sum up the evidence of the schoolmen : a few points strike one forcibly. The first is that all were agreed in placing the essence of confirmation in the unction with chrism and its accompanying form. Another is the way they met the difficulty that arises from the silence of scripture with regard to chrism. They never thought of meeting it by finding an imposition of hands in the act of consignation ; but preferred to maintain boldly that the imposition mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles had never been the sensible matter of the sacrament. Chrism, and it alone, had always been the sacramental sign ; and when the apostles imposed hands, that imposition was not sacramental. The spiritual effect, indeed, was thereby given ; but the ceremony was not the sacrament of confirmation ; which consisted of chrism alone.

SECTION 2.—THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE.

From the golden age of Scholasticism till the Council of Florence there is nothing to record of special interest as regards our subject. There were few writers of any prominence, and none of them calls for detailed examination. The Council of Florence, however, though it adds nothing to the information we have already gathered, is

an important landmark ; containing, as it does, an official recognition of the scholastic teaching as to the matter and form of confirmation,—in what is generally known as the Decree of Eugene IV. for the Armenians. This document was drawn up when the Greeks had left the Council, and the Armenians had expressed a desire to be reconciled with the Holy See. It is a summary of Western teaching on matters of importance ; and is infallible in some parts, but only in those which contain doctrines that had been already defined. Where it deals with the minister, and with the matter and form of the sacraments, it is now commonly held to be, not definitive, but only a practical exposition of the Western teaching of the time ; which, however, is thereby made official so as to command the highest respect and obedience.

Here is what it says of confirmation : “ The second sacrament is confirmation ; the matter of which is chrism, made of oil and balsam, blessed by a bishop ; the oil signifying brightness of conscience, the balsam signifying the sweetness of good fame. But the form is : *I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* The ordinary minister is the bishop. And although a simple priest can perform the other unctions, a bishop only should administer this ; for it is only of apostles, whose successors are the bishops, we read that they were accustomed to give the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands, as appears from the text of the Acts of the Apostles : ‘ When the apostles who were at Jerusalem,’ it says, ‘ had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. And when they had come, . . . they imposed hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.’ [Acts 8, 14 sqq.]. Now, in place of that imposition of hands, confirmation is given in the Church.”

The general meaning is clear enough : chrism and the

accompanying words are the matter and form of confirmation ; and, in view of the previous teaching of the schoolmen, as well as in the light of the whole decree, it is not fair to say, as did some later theologians, that it is integral or accidental, but not essential, matter which Eugene IV. contemplates. We notice that he makes no mention of an imposition of hands previous to unction ; and that he gives no hint that he regards unction with the bishop's hands as being itself an imposition. The apostolic rite has given way to unction ; for, as the decree states, "*in place of that imposition of hands confirmation is given in the Church*"¹ ; the matter of which is chrism.

These words, according to some later writers,—among them Suarez² and Bellarmine,³—do not signify difference of rite, but only of name. The bishop now does what the apostles did ; but what is now called confirmation, in apostolic times was called imposition of hands.

Apart from the violence which this interpretation does to the text, there is a yet stronger reason for rejecting it. The decree was taken almost word for word from the fifth *Opusculum* of St. Thomas, on the "Articles of Faith and the Sacraments of the Church" ; in which we find this same statement, at the end of his exposition of confirmation. He had been arguing against certain Greeks, who held that a simple priest could administer the sacrament ; and having advanced the fact that the apostles sent Peter and John to impose hands on the Samaritans who had been baptised by Philip, he concludes : "The bishops hold the place of the apostles in the Church, and in place of that imposition of hands confirmation is given in the Church."⁴ If the meaning of the decree is to be

¹ "Loco autem illius manus impositionis datur in Ecclesia confirmatio" Denz., *Ench. Symb.*, n. 697, Edit. xi.

² In 3 partem, qu. 72, art. 4, disp. 33, sect. 4.

³ *De Conf.*, cap. 9.

⁴ *Opuscula Omnia*, Bergomi, 1741, p. 118.

sought in the writings of St. Thomas, there can be no doubt that to him the two rites were distinct.

It is noteworthy in this connection that, at the Council of Florence there was no serious difference recognized between the Greeks and the Latins as to the rite of confirmation. The Greeks maintained that chrism is the essential matter; their *Euchologia* know no other. If there was any difference between them and the Latins in this respect, we should find traces of it in the discussions at the Council.

SECTION 3.—THE REFORMATION AND THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.

Protestantism in its essence was a reaction against the preceding life and progress of the Church. It refused to recognize any authority but Scripture, and cast aside any development that had not apostolic sanction. Christianity was a cast-iron structure, which had no principle of life, and could not expand as time went on. The Church of the Middle Ages had no claim to be that of the apostles; for in medieval Christianity great part was a human invention, altogether foreign to the spirit of the Bible. Many of the sacraments were rejected on this account—that they cannot be proved from Scripture and are later corruptions. The teaching of the earlier Reformers, though not directly bearing on our subject, is, nevertheless, of special interest, as it called forth three special canons of the Council of Trent on the sacrament of confirmation.

From his fundamental principle, that man is justified by faith alone, Luther was logically bound to reject the sacraments of the Church; which, if faith alone justifies, can have no part in the process of justification. They are, at best, external signs or tokens, akin to the sermons which recalled the divine promises and stimulated faith;

but they are not necessary for salvation—any more than sermons. As to the number of the sacraments, such as he would have them, Luther was not consistent ; sometimes he makes them five ; and again two or three. In a sermon on the New Testament, delivered in 1520, he taught baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, penance, and extreme unction, should be reckoned five sacraments ; but in the same year, in the Prelude to the Babylonian Captivity, he reduced this number to three. “ In the beginning,” he writes, “ I must deny that there are seven sacraments ; and for the time I must count only three, baptism, penance, and bread ; although, if I should speak according to the usage of Scripture, I should admit only one sacrament, and three sacramental signs.” ¹

Luther is well aware that the apostles imposed hands ; but this, he says, was merely to bestow charisms ; and since these have long passed away, there is now no need of the imposition ceremony. If the bishops have reserved to themselves the right of performing such a function, it has no value, and is merely an external sign to enhance the dignity of bishops, and to give them the appearance of having a serious occupation.

On the eve of the Diet of Worms, when his doctrine had been condemned by the Holy Office and by the Universities of Louvain and Cologne, Luther attempted to explain away what he had said ; maintaining that his opponents had misunderstood him, and that he did not wish to discard the other sacraments, but only to show that there was no valid proof of them from Scripture. “ I did not altogether deny them,” he writes ; “ but I added that according to Holy Scripture the thing is so, though I do not condemn the use and custom which is observed in the sacraments of the Church.” ² Although he would allow the practice of the Church in regard

¹ *De Capt. Baby.*, Wamar, t. vii, p. 501.

² *Ib.*, p. 608.

to other sacraments, he is careful to add that confirmation should be relegated to the rank of a mere ceremony, of human institution. It had no right to be called a sacrament in the strict sense ; but was invented by the Church, and had no promise of grace : " It is sufficient to regard confirmation as an ecclesiastical rite, or as a sacramental ceremony similar to that of blessing water and other things."

Melanchthon went a little farther than Luther, both in his teaching as regards confirmation and in his attempt to explain the evidence of the New Testament. Imposition of hands by the apostles was a useful ceremony ; but the rite of confirmation was a vain and foolish ceremony which could not be justified from Scripture. Candidates were examined in Christian doctrine immediately after baptism ; which was the essence of confirmation in the early Church, and was followed by a prayer said in common and by an imposition of hands. " Confirmation," writes Melanchthon, " was formerly an examination in doctrine, in which each recited the sum of the teaching, and the candidates gave proof that they did not agree with pagans and heretics. It was a custom which was really useful for the instruction of men, and for the purpose of discriminating between the ungodly and the pious. Afterwards there was a public prayer, and the apostles used to impose hands to bestow the outward gifts of the Holy Ghost ; but the rite of confirmation, which the bishop now retains, is an altogether vain ceremony." The same idea is embodied in the Augsburg Confession, which was composed by Melanchthon. According to this document, confirmation has no promise of the grace of God, and has no claim to be styled a sacrament ; but each Church can follow its own pleasure in rejecting or retaining the ceremony of imposition of hands.

Calvin is more pronounced in his view, and more abusive in his attack on the Catholic teaching. His

central idea is identical with that of Melanchthon. Confirmation in the early Church consisted essentially in a public profession of faith, which those who were baptised in infancy were bound to make before the bishop, when they reached the years of discretion. For greater solemnity, an imposition of hands and a blessing were added. The apostles employed such a ceremony to bestow charisms ; but, as these have disappeared, the ceremony has now no meaning ; it is a travesty on the apostolic imposition of hands. The sacrament of confirmation was an invention of a later period, when the Church had become corrupt and had fallen away from the spirit of the Gospel ; it is an empty barren sign, and only a sham sacrament. The chrism of confirmation was not instituted by Christ, nor by the apostles ; and whoever attributed to it any efficacy denied the redemption of Christ and deserved to be excluded from the kingdom of God. Confirmation is a manifest insult to baptism ; and the chrism of confirmation was an invention due to the wiles of the devil. There is no need to reproduce other epithets of this kind.

The Council of Trent was convoked by Paul III. to deal with the errors of the Reformers ; who had by this time formulated their teaching in precise and compendious form, thus making it easier for the Council to understand the real nature of their doctrines. Having, in the fifth and sixth sessions, set forth the Catholic doctrine of original sin and of justification, as against the theory of the Reformers ; the Fathers came in order to the sacraments in general, and of baptism and confirmation in particular, with which they dealt in the following session. As the Council of Lateran had already stated the Catholic doctrine on the sacraments, it was deemed sufficient to condemn the Protestant errors on the subject, without giving any connected exposition of Catholic teaching, as had been done in the previous sessions.

On the 17th January, 1547, a list of errors, extracted from the writings of the Protestants, was read before a preliminary meeting of the Council. It contained in all thirty-five propositions, of which four referred to confirmation, to wit : 1. Confirmation is not a sacrament (this from the *Babylonian Captivity* of Luther) ; 2. It was instituted by the Fathers, and has no promise of grace (this from the *Augsburg Confession*) ; 3. It is now a useless ceremony, and was formerly nothing more than a statement of faith, made by children before the Church (this from the *Loci Communes* of Melanchthon) ; 4. A bishop is not the sole minister thereof ; but any priest may confer it.

These thirty-five propositions were submitted, for examination, to the consulting theologians ; who were asked to state, with proofs, whether they were objectionable and how far ; and to report whether they considered the condemnation of any other propositions advisable. The theologians, who had no difficulty in quoting authorities, recommended that the first three propositions about confirmation should be condemned without qualification. The fourth some would have modified ; while many would condemn it with the other three. The Consultors advised, moreover, that two other propositions, taken from the *Christian Institutions* of Calvin, should be condemned, to wit : 1. He who says that the oil of chrism is an oil of salvation denies Christ ; and 2. It is an outrage on the Holy Ghost to attribute any efficacy to the oil of confirmation.

When the vota of the Consultors were submitted, another discussion took place among the Fathers of the Council. The first three propositions were condemned unanimously ; but it was not so easy to ascertain the tradition as to the minister of confirmation. Three special canons were formulated on that sacrament ; and on the 3rd March these were ratified and published in solemn session.

Canon I runs thus:—"If anyone says, that confirmation of those who have been baptised is a vain ceremony, and not rather a true and proper sacrament; or that, of old, it was nothing more than a kind of catechism, whereby those who were near adolescence gave account of their faith in the face of the Church: let him be anathema."

The Council had already defined the first part of this canon, in laying down the doctrine on sacraments in general; when it expressly included confirmation among the seven sacraments, and decided that each of the seven was a true and proper sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ. This was clearly against the teaching of the Reformers, that some of the sacraments were merely of human institution, having been invented by the Church. The second part of the canon condemns the doctrine of Calvin and Melanchthon, that in the early Church confirmation was only an examination in doctrine or a public profession of faith. Neither, however, in its canons on sacraments in general, nor in this on confirmation, has the Council determined the time and the manner in which Christ instituted the sacrament; though it excludes the opinion of those earlier Franciscans, who held, as we have seen, that confirmation was instituted by the Holy Ghost. The institution of all the sacraments by Christ was defined against the Reformers; but the Fathers of the Council did not wish to dispose finally of any question which was freely disputed in the Catholic schools. Even in after years many theologians¹ held that it was a matter for

¹ "Theologians, however, do not agree whether the immediate institution is a truth of faith defined by the Council of Trent. Some, as Bellarmine and Vasquez affirm; Suarez and Arriaga say that it is certain, from the words of the Council; they do not, however, say simply that it is a matter of faith. . . . Tapper and Ravestein,—two Louvain doctors who were present at the Council,—Estius, Juenin, Tournely, Cardinal Gotti, Drouin, etc., likewise deny that the immediate institution of all the sacraments by Christ while he dwelt on earth, was defined by the Council of Trent." Franzelin, *De Sac. in genere*, th. xiv.

free dispute whether the sacraments were instituted immediately, or only mediately, by Christ ; and that, accordingly, this question was not defined by the Council.

Canon 2 runs thus :—" If anyone says, that they who ascribe any virtue to the sacred chrism of confirmation, offer an insult to the Holy Ghost ; let him be anathema."

This also was aimed at the Reformers ; and especially at Calvin. It is not a definition of the origin of chrism ; nor does it state anything about the time of its institution. So much is clear ; but is it defined that chrism is the essential matter of confirmation ? One may notice that the necessity of chrism in confirmation is not defined ; though it was defined expressly that water is necessary for baptism ; and this canon might be explained on the hypothesis that chrism is a constituent, though not an essential, element in the confirmation rite ; as also if it was only one of the essential elements. One may notice also that the Council is very guarded in its language ; as, for instance, with regard to the effect which is ascribed to chrism—*aliquam virtutem* (some virtue) ; which may be predicated of any sacramental. It would seem, then, that the Council did not wish to define the matter of confirmation ; but merely to condemn the error of Calvin, that the use of chrism in the Church was due to the artifices of the devil. But although it may not be defined that chrism is the essential matter, it is another question whether it was considered so at the time of the Council. There can be, I think, no doubt that it was ; but owing to the obscurity of the tradition as regards confirmation, the Fathers abstained from defining much about the sacrament, being content to exclude the errors of the Reformers.

Canon 3 runs :—" If anyone says, that the ordinary minister of holy confirmation is not the bishop alone,

but any simple priest whatsoever; let him be anathema."

We shall reserve consideration of this canon to a later chapter, wherein we shall deal specially with the minister.

The decrees of the Council of Trent were hailed with a howl of opposition from the Reformers. Luther had passed away while the Council was in progress; but Calvin survived to write a sarcastic reply to its decrees, including that on confirmation, which he continued to regard as one "among the most mischievous delusions of Satan." ¹

But by far the ablest reply to the Council was attempted by Chemnitz (1522-1586), a disciple of Melanchthon, whose views he commented on and reduced to systematic form. The *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, which is his most important work, began to appear in 1565, and was completed in 1575. It is, in the main, an attempt to prove that it is, not the Protestant, but the Roman Church which fell away from the original faith. In regard to confirmation, Chemnitz had thoroughly imbibed the views of his master, Melanchthon—that, in apostolic times, imposition of hands was an ordinary symbol used in prayer; that it was not meant to be perpetual; that it was but a mockery to continue it, as there was no command of God to do so. It was, however, by a special dispensation that imposition of hands was no longer retained in confirmation; for, had it been retained, the example of the apostles might give it some appearance of being a sacrament. Seeing, however, that it was changed into unction, it is manifest that the sacrament of confirmation has neither been instituted nor commanded by Christ.² Chemnitz examined in detail the three special canons on confirmation; devoting considerable attention to the

¹ *Acta Synodi Tridentinae cum Antidoto*, p. 299.

² *Examinis Conc. Trid. per D. D. Martinum Chemnicium scripti*; opus integrum, Francofurti, 1609, p. 204, 205.

historical aspect of the question ; though his views were largely coloured by *a priori* theories on the nature and the institution of the sacraments, and by a false interpretation of the facts of history. He continually urges that there is no mention of chrism in Scripture, and that imposition of hands has dropped out of the Pontificals ¹ ; and he explains away all the testimony of the early Fathers by saying that unction and imposition of hands were ceremonies of baptism, but not a distinct sacrament.

It was controversies like this with Chemnitz that caused the Catholic theologians to leave for a time the field of scholastic theology, and to seek to justify the doctrine of the Church by appeal to history. To convince Protestants that the faith of the Church had always been substantially the same, historical researches had to be undertaken ; but, while these more than justified the dogmas of the Church, some of the hypotheses which had been put forward in the golden age of Scholasticism had to be modified.

¹ Ibid., p. 248-260.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CATHOLIC REACTION.

THE Reformation, as we have seen, seriously disturbed the calm of Scholastic Theology; and to refute the Protestants it was necessary for the Catholic controversialists to make a deeper study of the records of the past—a task to which they set themselves with an energy and an earnestness worthy of the successors of Jerome and Augustine. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were perhaps the most critical in the history of the Church, and we may well look to them with pride. They are characterised by a marvellous output of genuine historical work. Scarce any department of theology but was made the subject of learned research, and the sacred rites of the Church received special attention. The comparative method was extensively followed; the various Greek rites were examined and compared with the Latin, to find a basis for Sacramental Theology. Nor were these labours confined to the West; they were also undertaken in the East. The Reformers had attempted to involve the Greek Church in their errors on the sacraments; and in reply to this interference, the Greek Arcudius published in 1619 his "*De Concordia Ecclesiae occidentalis et orientalis in septem sacramentorum administratione.*" In the West Morinus gave to the world in the years 1651 and 1655 the result of his historical labours, in the shape of two monumental treatises on the sacraments of penance and order. Shortly afterwards Martène and Renaudot published works of a similar kind, which displayed vast reudition. Goar turned his attention to the Eastern

rites ; and, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, published his "*Euchologion, sive Rituale Graecorum.*" The theologians, too,—controversialists and disputants,—began to look more critically into the historical facts on which their theses or their conclusions depended.

Though history completely vindicated, against the Protestants, the sacramental doctrines of the Church, as expressed in her definitions ; it brought to light many facts which were hard to reconcile with certain theories that had been accepted in the Catholic schools. Proof beyond question was given of the existence of the seven sacraments, of their institution by Christ, and of their objective efficacy ; but it was shown that in the mode of administering some of those sacred rites there had been considerable development, which it was difficult to reconcile with the view that the matter and form of each had been determined by Christ *in specie*. For if Christ had so determined them, how account for the variations through which they passed, or even for the diversity of practice which existed between the Eastern and Western Churches ? The sacraments of order, penance, and confirmation received special attention in this respect. The apostles ordained by imposition of hands ; and while the Greek Church still used no other matter in administering order, the Western Church of the early middle ages had added a giving of instruments. So, too, in the case of penance ; down to the thirteenth century the form of absolution had been deprecative, both in East and West ; but about that time, while many Churches in the East still retained the deprecative form, the Latin Church began to use the indicative. Similarly, as regards confirmation ; whereas the New Testament makes no mention of chrism, it came into universal use ; and was, furthermore, accompanied by a form which underwent many transformations in the West, varying from the fourth century Greek form, " the seal of the gift of the

Holy Ghost," to that which is now used everywhere in the West, though it was not in general use there till the twelfth century.

This general spirit of inquiry led to an examination of the history of confirmation ; with the result that theologians had no difficulty in proving, against Chemnitz and his followers, that it was a true sacrament, distinct from baptism. The New Testament and the constant tradition of the Church showed clearly that the two were not to be confounded. Nor was confirmation attached to baptism as a mere ceremony which, though not instituted by Christ, was afterwards raised by an ignorant Church to the dignity of a sacrament. The Acts of the Apostles, the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine—no ignorant men—bore unmistakable testimony to its sacramental efficacy.

So far the Catholic theologians of the Reformation period were unanimous. On certain subsidiary questions, however, there was great diversity of opinion ; and this was especially true of their discussions regarding the essential matter and form of the confirmation rite. In the main three opinions were advanced, each of which had numerous modifications ; and as it would be impossible within due limits to examine them all in detail, we must confine ourselves to setting forth the salient features. Some thought the essential matter was to be found in that imposition of hands which precedes the unction ; others that unction itself was the matter ; while others still found the matter in a combination of both. As regards the form, a similar difference of opinion manifested itself. Some would have it that only the deprecativ form which precedes the unction was essential ; others that the indicative form which accompanies the unction was more important ; while a third party, combining these ideas, required both forms—the indicative and the deprecativ. We shall briefly

examine each view, the exigencies which inspired it, and the arguments of those by whom it was propounded.

1. Chrism is the matter of confirmation, said the Protestants; how, then, can that rite be a sacrament, since there is not a trace of Scriptural authority for the use of chrism? Chrism is not the matter of confirmation, boldly replied the theologians of the first school; it is necessary by Church precept, but only as integral or accidental matter. As the imposition of hands mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and clearly employed in the early centuries, was a true sacrament, no matter what a small number of the earlier Schoolmen may have taught; the essential matter is still that imposition which precedes the unction with chrism. This met the Protestant argument; but it had its difficulties, arising mainly from the teaching of the Schoolmen, and especially from the decree of Eugene IV.; which had to be rejected or explained.

It will be within the memory of the reader that Eugene declared chrism to be the matter of confirmation. This was the first source of difficulty. Bellarmine, who had to face a similar question with regard to the sacrament of order, suggested that Eugene meant to decide at most, what was integral, not what was essential matter. Eugene, however, had said that confirmation is now given in the Church in place of apostolic imposition of hands; implying plainly that chrism has taken the place of the imposition, which has now either ceased altogether or become a mere ceremony. There were, of course, ingenious—too ingenious—explanations of Pope Eugene's teaching; which were not confined to those who advocated this first theory. Bellarmine, Ysambert, and those who held, with them, that the imposition of hands in unction is essential, had to show how confirmation could have *taken the place of* the apostolic imposition. Bellarmine's explanation, which was generally adopted, was to the effect that the statement of Eugene was either an obiter

dictum, or else merely implied a succession of different names, not a succession of different rites. Meratius, indeed, though of the same opinion as Bellarmine with regard to the matter of confirmation, frankly confessed that Eugene's words implied a difference of rite ; but the Pope, he thought, did not teach definitively, but merely gave provisional instruction for the Armenians.

As regards the theory that the bishop imposes hands when he anoints the forehead, Sirmond said it was ridiculous to look for an imposition in this, frontal, unction ; "since no one ever dreamt of seeking it in the vertical unction, where it may be found much more naturally." ¹ This also was the teaching of Saintebeuve,² a professor of the Sarbonne in the middle of the seventeenth century. Morinus,³ too, though not in agreement with these theologians as regards the essential matter of confirmation, scouted with them the idea that there is an imposition of hands in the rite of unction. "That view," he says, "finds for itself an imposition of hands where there is no sign or trace of it." Many other theologians pointed out that this opinion supposed a far-fetched explanation of the early evidence.

Those theologians who maintained that the imposition of hands which precedes the unction is the essential matter, were compelled to hold that the form of the sacrament is the prayer which accompanies that rite ; the indicative form "Signo te, etc." being only a ceremonial accessory that was added by the Church. The Acts of the Apostles seemed to favour this view. As, from the words of St. James, "let them *pray* over him . . . and the *prayer* of faith shall save the sick man," St. Thomas concluded that the form of extreme unction must be deprecativ ;

¹ "Ridiculum esse impositionem manus in frontis unctione quaerere, cum in verticis unctione, quod multo verisimilius foret, nemo usque somniarit." *Antirrheticus*.

² *Tract. De Sac. Conf. et Unct. Extr.*, Disp. iii, prop. 2.

³ *Opera Posthuma, De Sac. Conf.*, cap. i.

so the words of St. Luke, "they *prayed* for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost," point, it was now thought, to the necessity of a similar form in confirmation. The early Fathers, moreover, and the early Western Sacramentaries confirm this view. Tertullian and Cyprian, Siricius, Jerome and Augustine, always said that the Holy Ghost was given by *prayer*; and in the Gregorian Sacramentary there is no trace of an indicative form.

Objections based on the Decree of Eugene IV. were explained on lines similar to those concerning the matter. The Greek rite of confirmation, indeed, presented some difficulty; but it might be maintained that as, even in the Greek rite,—if that was a sacrament at all,—the prayer which preceded the unction was accompanied by an imposition of hands, this prayer was the essential form.

2. The opinion that unction with chrism, apart from any imposition, is the essential matter, was more widely held than that which we have been considering; indeed it was never very widely maintained that the prayer and imposition, which precede unction, are the essence of the sacrament. St. Thomas had held that, not only was chrism the essential matter in his day, but that it was so in the days of the apostles: imposition of hands had never been an essential part of the rite. After his time, however, theologians came to recognise that chrism took the place of the sacramental imposition of hands whereby the Samaritans and Ephesians had been confirmed by the Apostles.

As to the time and mode of this substitution, there were many opinions. Some held that, at the beginning of their ministry, the apostles used imposition, but later on substituted chrism; acting always under the direct command of Christ. Tapper, dean of the theological faculty at Louvain, was the first to propound this view. "The apostles," he wrote, "at first used imposition of hands as the matter of the sacrament, at the suggestion of

Christ. . . . When tongues and other miracles ceased, it was necessary to institute and employ a peculiar and distinct sign, on account of the confusion which might arise from the different kinds of imposition of hands ; for the Apostles imposed hands to produce various effects." Bellarmine considered this view probable in his time ; but said he saw no foundation for it "*nisi recentiorum auctoritate.*" Others preferred to hold that Christ had determined the matter and form merely in generic fashion, leaving to the apostles and the Church the power of choosing and modifying the external sign. As a parallel case, they indicated the sacrament of order, where the Church had certainly supplemented the rite of imposition by delivery of instruments. "Granting," said Estius, "that it is more commonly held that at the beginning of their preaching the apostles did not use chrism in the administration of this sacrament ; it is also probable that the imposition of hands was the matter, and prayer the form ; so that these were necessarily employed for conferring the Holy Ghost by human ministry, until chrism with its suitable form,—which alone constitute the essential parts of this sacrament,—was introduced. Then imposition of hands ceased to be necessary in so far as the essence and integrity of the sacrament are concerned, since imposition now is neither the form, nor the matter, nor a part of either ; but only a sacramental ceremony which came down from apostolic tradition. Still it should never be omitted, as it is necessary by Church precept, though not of the essence of the sacrament. This teaching is in harmony with the Decree of Florence on the sacraments, wherein we read that in place of the imposition of hands whereby the apostles were accustomed to bestow the Holy Ghost, confirmation is given in the Church ; the matter of which confirmation is chrism." ¹ The authority of the Schoolmen and of

¹ Sent. iv, Dist. 7, § 7.

Eugene IV. was adduced in support of this view ; and was reinforced by a decree of the Synod of Mayence, held in 1549, which declared that in the beginning confirmation was conferred by imposition of hands, but that some time after the death of the apostles the imposition was abrogated, chrism taking its place : " This sacrament was from the beginning administered solely by imposition of hands ; but soon after apostolic times it began to be conferred by unction with chrism." ¹

Needless to say, the defenders of this view regarded as valid only the indicative form which accompanied the unction. Yet they were not agreed as to its origin ; some inclining to the opinion of St. Thomas, others favouring that of Estius. The former invoked the discipline of the secret, to explain the silence of the early tradition and of the Sacramentaries ; while according to the latter the indicative form was of comparatively recent origin.

3. A third opinion as to the matter of confirmation, combining those which we have been considering, required both an imposition and an unction. All who held this view regarded some imposition as necessary ; but they were not agreed as to which. Some thought it was that which now precedes the unction ; others that which is contained in the unction—on the forehead, by the thumb ; while a third party held that both these rites were necessary. The first who found imposition of hands in the unction was Bellarmine ; whose attitude, however, was not decided. In the opening of his treatise on confirmation, where he proves that it is a true sacrament, he says, in reply to Chemnitz : " It is false to say that imposition of hands has become obsolete ; for the bishop lays hands twice on those who are confirmed, as is clear from the Roman Pontifical ; first, when he extends his hands over them in prayer ; and a second time, when he

¹ Cf. Tournely, *De Sac. Conf.*, q. 1, Art. iii.

signs them on the forehead and anoints them. For as this unction and signation are performed by the hand, they are properly called an imposition of hands.”¹ Here Bellarmine does not say which imposition he regards as matter of the sacrament ; but further on, in a long explicit dissertation on that question of matter, he speaks only of unction, without a mention of any imposition of hands. Towards the close of this dissertation, he recalls the fact that St. Luke mentions imposition of hands alone ; and his reply to this is interesting : Either, he says, chrism was substituted for the imposition, as St. Thomas held ; or there is an imposition in the unction itself. He prefers the latter alternative ; for he can find no authority in antiquity for the opinion that the apostles changed the matter of the sacrament. He is at a similar loss to find a basis in early tradition for the opinion which he prefers : he can quote in its favour only the immediate predecessors of the Schoolmen.

I find that many modern writers,² after Billuart, quote Bellarmine and Maldonatus as holding that chrism alone is the matter of the sacrament ; and that it had been substituted for imposition of hands. It will be seen from the foregoing that this is scarcely a fair presentation of Bellarmine’s view ; nor do I find much reason for thinking Maldonatus favoured that opinion. “ We do not read,” he writes, “ that the apostles employed any other matter than the external imposition of hands ; and even to-day we must call this imposition the matter. Yet the Church has ever called chrism the matter of the sacrament ; and it is plain from the authors who lived near the apostolic age, that chrism was used by the apostles. The Church, then, does not regard chrism alone as the matter ; but it calls it the matter, because, whenever any element

¹ *Opera Bellar.*, Naples, 1855, tom. iii, p. 216.

² Cf. Hurter, *Theol. Dog. Comp.*, vol. 3 ; Tanqueray, *Synop. Theol. Moralis*, vol. 3.

is employed, it is either the whole or part of the matter of a sacrament. Someone will say : ' But the Church has no authority to institute either the whole or part of the matter of a sacrament ; for which reason, if chrism was not part of the matter in apostolic times, it could not become such afterwards.' Theologians rightly reply that when Christ instituted this sacrament, he instructed the apostles that they had power to employ as matter either imposition of hands alone, or imposition of chrism. Accordingly, whilst the apostles saw that the Holy Ghost was being given in a visible manner by imposition of hands, they never employed chrism ; but as soon as the Holy Ghost ceased to be given thus visibly, they added chrism, to signify that He is given in an invisible manner." ¹

From this extract it would appear that Billuart and those who followed him have not given a correct presentation of the opinion of Maldonatus. He did not hold that chrism was substituted for imposition ; but that it was made to supplement the imposition, so that imposition might be called the matter, or at least part of the matter, of the sacrament. It is difficult to decide which imposition Maldonatus has before his mind ; but it seems more probable that he refers to that which is inseparable from unction ; as he recognizes as valid only the indicative form which accompanies that rite. It was this view which was ascribed to him by those who came after him immediately in the Schools.²

That two impositions are necessary has been held, as we have said, by many theologians, including Witasse³

¹ *Disp. circa septem Rom. Eccl. sacramenta*, Lugduni, 1614, tom. i, p. 113.

² Cf. Saintebeuve, *De Conf.*, Disp. iii, art. 1 ; Tournely, *De Conf.*, qu. i, art. 3.

³ The treatise of Witasse is found in the *Cursus Completus* of Migne tom. xxi. We shall speak of it as the work of Witasse, though it was continued and perfected by an Oratorian Father. Much of its learning is derived from an earlier treatise by Saintebeuve.

and Tournely, of whom the former seems to have made a deep study of the historical aspect of the question. It is, therefore, of special interest to note the difficulties which he finds. Convinced that the imposition which precedes the unction was essential during the first nine centuries, he still had difficulty in deciding whether this was so in his own time. Nor does he state definitely to what opinion he adheres ; contenting himself with giving the arguments on both sides. Tournely finds the same difficulties. Though convinced that the imposition and the unction were sometimes combined into one action in the early middle ages, he is inclined to think a separate imposition necessary, as this is more in harmony with the teaching and practice of antiquity. Both he and Witasse hold that unction itself contains an imposition ; though they find no support for this either in early or in Scholastic tradition. Both clearly maintain that unction is necessary for validity.

Witasse thinks that in the Western Church the form of confirmation was deprecativè for the first nine centuries ; after which this prayer became a mere ceremony ; while another, indicative, form took its place. He waxes indignant with Thomists and Scotists for ascribing greater antiquity to the indicative form : “ *Viderint igitur Thomistae et Scotistae, quo fundamento doceant hanc formulam, ‘ Signo te signo crucis, etc.,’ a Christo institutam, et ab apostolis usurpatam fuisse.*”¹ The change from the deprecativè to the indicative can best be explained on the hypothesis that Christ determined the matter and the form of the sacrament *in genere*, leaving to the Church the power of making specific alterations.

Tournely² here differs from Witasse. He thinks that both the deprecativè and the indicative forms are essential—that they combine to form one complex sacrament. To the objection that the Greek Church recognizes

¹ *De Conf.*, qu. ii, art. 3.

² *Op. cit.*, art. 4.

no imposition and no deprecatory form, he replies,—in face of the constant tradition of Eastern scholars,—that these elements are found in that part of the rite which precedes the consignation. But even this had its difficulty ; for, in the first place, no imposition accompanied the prayer, in the East ; and, besides, the prayer was recited over the candidates in one Church, while the unction,—to which the indicative form was attached,—was usually performed in another. How, then, could the two combine ? Tournely explains the silence in regard to the indicative form, either by the discipline of the secret, or on the hypothesis that Christ did not specifically determine the matter and form of confirmation.

Such in brief outline were the different theories advanced during this period ; and we can see that the sacramental rite of confirmation, which appears so simple in the ordinary handbooks of the present day, presents many difficulties when we consult the great theologians and the history of the rite. There is one thing which strikes the student with remarkable force : no one found the matter of the sacrament exclusively in the imposition of hands which is inseparable from unction. If this were a true imposition, we should expect that some theologian would have found in it a satisfactory explanation.

Confirmation was not the only sacrament to present historical difficulties of the same kind. Towards the close of the Scholastic period, Eugene IV. declared that the matter of order lay in the giving of instruments ; yet it was found that this ceremony was not in use in the East. Historical research, moreover, could find no proof that for the first nine centuries it had found any place in the ritual of the West. It was shown, similarly, that, in the case of penance the form of absolution had been deprecatory for a long time ; as it is in the Orthodox Church at present. Yet in the West it had become indicative.

Facts of this kind were disconcerting, and various theories were advanced to explain these changes and discrepancies ; the different solutions being prompted by a diversity of opinion regarding the Church's power over the matter and form of some of the sacraments.

Some theologians held that Christ personally had exactly determined the essential elements, so that the Church could make only accidental alterations. The differences of rite, therefore, could only be accidental ; or could pertain, at most, only to the integrity of the sacrament, the substance of which must remain the same in all times and places. So, when Eugene IV. taught that delivery of instruments is the matter of order, he did not mean to expound the whole rite of that sacrament ; but merely instructed the Armenians as to a ceremony which was unknown amongst them, though in the West it had been in use for centuries as part—though not a substantial part—of the ordination rite.¹ This was scarcely a fair interpretation of Eugene's decree.

Another explanation of the facts gradually came into prominence. Before the time of Morinus some theologians had, more or less vaguely, formulated the view that, though Christ instituted the sacraments immediately, he did so, in the case of some, only in generic fashion ; leaving to the Church considerable liberty to modify the essential rite. Morinus seized upon the idea, gave it definite shape, and popularised it. After reviewing briefly the ancient rites of confirmation and extreme unction, as they were administered in the East and West, he proceeds : " What has been brought forward in the preceding chapter seems to me to demonstrate clearly the probability of the opinion of those scholars who assert that Christ, our Lord, instituted only in a general fashion the matter and form of the greater number of the sacraments, entrusting their determination to the authority and prudence of the

¹ Cf. Bellarmine, *De Sac. Ordinis*, cap. 9.

apostles and of the Church. For, had Christ instituted and determined them for the apostles, they would be the same at all times and among all peoples. Whereas in both cases we find the contrary ; for the East differs very much from the West in this matter. . . . Wherefore it seems that we should by all means say that the determination of these things was left to the definition of the Churches." ¹

In support of this view Morinus cites many authorities ; among whom the foremost is Innocent IV., who taught that order was conferred in apostolic times by imposition of hands and prayer, and that the other rites which were regarded as essential in his time were of later introduction : " Concerning the apostolic rite we find in the Epistle to Timothy that they imposed hands and prayed over the candidates ; but we do not find that they employed any other form. Hence we believe that, if those other forms were not instituted afterwards, it would be sufficient for the ordaining prelate to say, ' Be a priest,' or to use other words of like import. In subsequent times, however, the Church determined the forms which are employed." ²

Though Morinus grants that this theory affords the most satisfactory explanation of the facts of history, he seems to have felt some difficulty in adopting it ; for, in the very next chapter, he admits that the facts can be squared with the Scholastic theory of immutability of matter and form.³ To do this, however, he has to reject both the Thomistic theory and the teaching of Eugene IV. regarding the matter of order, and to relegate the delivery of instruments to the rank of a mere ceremony. Moreover, both Eugene ⁴ and the Council of Trent ⁵ had decided

¹ Morinus, *De Adm. Sac. Poen.*, Lib. viii, cap. xvii, n. 1.

² *Ib.*, n. 2.

³ " For there is no necessity to reject this common axiom, that the matter and form of the sacraments may not be changed, but is the same everywhere in any Church whatsoever." *Ib.*, cap. xviii, n. 2.

⁴ Denz. *Ench. Symb.*, n. 699.

⁵ *Ib.*, n. 896.

that the form of absolution in penance consists of the words, "Ego te absolvo, etc.," though a deprecativ form had been employed for centuries in the West, and was still in use in the East. In reply to this Morinus says the indicative form, prescribed by the Council of Trent, is in reality deprecativ, since it contains an invocation of the Trinity : that is to say, the principal thing in the indicative form is the invocation of the Trinity ; which makes the whole form deprecativ, as the primary constituent absorbs the secondary. One might surely expect something better from Morinus.¹

The theory of generic determination gradually became popular, under the influence of historical research. It was formally discussed in all the theological works that appeared towards the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth ; and was relied on, in particular, by Cardinal De Lugo,² Witasse³ and Tournely.

¹ Before Morinus Estius had admitted as probable the hypothesis of generic determination of the matter and form of some sacraments. He testifies that many Catholics of his time were of the same opinion. Cf. Estius, *Dist. iv, i, § 16*.

² "Adverte ; cum dicimus, Christum instituisse per se omnia, et singula sacramenta ; non intendere nos, singulorum materias fuisse omnino determinatas a Christo, nam ut vidimus jam *disp. ii, sect. v*. Christus in aliquibus sacramentis solum determinavit materiam in genere, verbi gratia. in ordine ad actionem externam, quae sufficienter significet traditionem potestatis. Unde idem ordo sacerdotii apud Latinos confertur per porrectionem hostiae et vini, etc. Apud Graecos vero per solam manuum impositionem cum verbis significantibus traditionem potestatis. Utraque autem materia fuit a Christo instituta non determinate, sed disjunctim, ut supra diximus." De Lugo, *De sac. in genere, Disp. viii, sect. i*.

³ Witasse gives, with approval, the following extract from Amicus : "Cum enim materia et forma hujus sacramenti (confirmationis) non fuerit a Christo determinata quoad speciem, sed tantum quoad genus sub ratione signi sensibilis, expressivi Spiritus Sancti roboris, quod per hoc sacramentum datur ; juxta hanc sententiam, potuit Ecclesia, in cujus potestate erat, hoc signum quoad speciem determinare pro uno tempore, uti sola manuum impositione ; pro alio cum manus impositione, chrismatis etiam inunctione ; pro alio vero sola chrismatis inunctione, ut utitur nunc, secundum quem modum optime consonant omnia, quae Patres et Concilia de hoc sacramento docent, cujus diversas pro diversis temporibus assignant materias." *De Conf., Pars. I, art. iii, sect. 3, circa finem*.

Others, however, following Suarez, still thought the facts of history could be reconciled with the theory that the matter and form were specifically determined by Christ ; though certain modifications had to be introduced into the teaching of Suarez. Billuart, the ablest of this school, exercised a very considerable influence in moulding the ideas of the latter half of the eighteenth and the greater part of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, as we shall see, there is at the present day a tendency to return to the theory of generic determination.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MINISTER.

OF the many questions connected with confirmation, that of the minister is the most interesting ; as also the most difficult : it may throw some light on the object of our enquiry. The Catholic teaching is contained in the decrees of the Council of Trent ¹ and in that of Eugene IV.² for the Armenians. Of the two Tridentine canons which bear on the subject ; the first anathematises anyone who asserts that the ordinary minister is not a bishop ; and the second anyone who says that the power to confirm is common to bishops and priests. About a century previously, Eugene had already laid down that the bishop was the ordinary minister ; adding, however, that the Holy See had sometimes given a dispensation whereby a simple priest was enabled to confirm. We shall examine briefly the historical setting of this teaching, and then consider some of the theological problems which it involves.

For some centuries before the Council of Florence the scholastic theologians taught unanimously that to administer confirmation was the exclusive right of bishops ; on the ground—as we learn from St. Thomas, a representative theologian—that the apostles alone imposed

¹ (a) “ Si quis dixerit, sanctae confirmationis ordinarium ministrum non esse solum episcopum, sed quemvis simplicem sacerdotem : A. S.” Denz., n. 873. (b) “ Si quis dixerit, episcopos non esse presbyteris superiores, vel non habere potestatem confirmandi et ordinandi ; vel eam, quam habent, illis esse cum presbyteris communem. . . . A. S.” Denz., n. 967.

² “ Ordinarius minister est episcopus. . . . Legitur tamen aliquando per Apostolicae Sedis dispensationem ex rationabili et urgente admodum causa simplicem sacerdotem chrismate per episcopum confecto hoc administrasse sacramentum.” Denz., n. 697.

hands in their time, and that the bishops are the successors of the apostles. Confirmation, moreover, completed the process of initiation, by making perfect Christians ; and it is fitting that such a crowning act should be reserved to the person of the most eminent dignity.

Richard Fitzralph,¹ Archbishop of Armagh, who died in 1361,—and who has been accused of departing from the common view ; though his conclusions, probably, were those of his contemporaries, based on reasons different from theirs,—taught that bishops and priests could confirm, as regards the power of order, and that confirmation was reserved to bishops by Church precept merely, and not by any divine arrangement. Scotus,² some time before this, had considered it probable that there was no distinction between bishops and priests in the primitive Church ; and that priests could then confirm in virtue of their office, but that the power had been reserved at a later date. It was this view, most likely, which Fitzralph advocated ; but his enemies seized eagerly on some unguarded phrases, by reason of which they would have him rank with Wicliffe and other heretics who denied that the right to confirm belonged to bishops exclusively.

The schoolmen, however, were not agreed as to whether a simple priest could be commissioned to act as minister ; many regarding it as impossible, though it presented no difficulty to the minds of the greatest masters. Among those who refused to admit it were Hugh of St. Victor, Peter Lombard, and Albert the Great ; while the opposite was held by Roland Bandinelli, St. Thomas, and Scotus. Roland³ thinks that simple priests could confirm in the early Church owing to the limited number of bishops ; and St. Thomas teaches that, as the Pope has the fulness

¹ Cf. "*Summa in Quaestionibus Armenorum*"; Paris, 1511 ; Lib. xi, cap. 4, 5.

² Lib. iv, Dist. vii, Scholium 2.

³ Gietl, *Die Sent. Rol.*, p. 213.

of authority in the Church, he can grant a simple priest the power to confirm just as he can grant him that of conferring minor orders.

Despite the fact that, in the Decree for the Armenians, Eugene IV. seems to endorse the teaching of St. Thomas, the controversy still continued; and in the interval between the Council of Florence and that of Trent, it was held by many that a simple priest could not be delegated to confer the sacrament. Among these who taught this were Gabriel Biel, the greatest of the later scholastics, John the Greater, and Hadrian VI.; who contended that Eugene merely stated "the Apostolic See sometimes gave a dispensation, *as we read*," without intending to approve, much less to define the doctrine that was thereby implied. This view of Biel's, however, was not the common teaching.

So things stood when the question came up at the Council of Trent; the Acts of which show what difficulty the Fathers experienced in formulating the Catholic doctrine. The Reformers had challenged the exclusive right of the bishop to confirm; which, they held to be within the competence of any simple priest. When this doctrine was submitted to the consulting theologians, a diversity of opinion became manifest; some holding that it could not be condemned without qualification, seeing that simple priests may confirm in case of necessity; others wishing the doctrine to be condemned as it stood, since the priest in case of necessity acts as delegate of the bishop; the majority, however, maintaining that the bishop alone is minister, though the Pope can delegate a simple priest.

The Fathers were not more of one mind than the theologians. The majority advised the Council to say nothing as to the powers of simple priests, but to condemn outright the doctrine that bishops are not the sole ministers of confirmation. Some held that the Pope could

not delegate a simple priest, as the power to confirm pertained to bishops alone, in virtue of the divine law ; and that, if such power was ever given to a simple priest, it was invalid. Many held, on the contrary, that the commission might be given.

At length, after numerous discussions and various attempts to formulate a definition, they all agreed to a decree in which it is stated that the bishop alone, and not any simple priest is the ordinary minister of the sacrament. This was deemed sufficient to condemn the error of the Reformers ; but, as will be noticed, it does not explicitly define anything as regards the delegation of a simple priest. From the fact that the Council designated the bishop as ordinary minister, it might seem that it contemplates an extraordinary one ; but it has been contended that there is no extraordinary minister of a sacrament.

The controversy continued after the Council, the validity of any delegation given to a simple priest being still denied by many ; among them some eminent theologians, such as Peter Soto, Estius, Aurelius, Saintebeuve,—some of whom were present at the Council ;—and later authorities, Thomists as well as Scotists, deemed the question one on which either side could be taken without disobedience to the teaching authority of the Church. The opinion of Soto and Estius has now passed out of favour, and is regarded as uncatholic, though not heretical. The Holy See has so often delegated priests to administer confirmation, that there can be little doubt of the validity of the act.

Let us take it, therefore, that the Pope can delegate a simple priest ; and let us ask what the priest receives by this delegation ? Is it a new power of order, or is it power of jurisdiction ? It cannot be an extension of the priestly character making it episcopal for the time ; as episcopal character is conferred only by ordination—not by a mere papal letter. It would seem, then, that in

administering confirmation bishop, and priest, exercise the same power of order ; whereupon the question arises whether confirmation is valid if administered by a priest without delegation. If not, why, in like circumstances, are baptism, the Eucharist, order, and extreme unction, valid ? If, on the other hand, on the analogy of penance, we say that papal delegation supplies jurisdiction, there is another difficulty ; as bishops of heretical sects, who are deprived of jurisdiction, could not validly administer confirmation ; nor even Catholic bishops to those who are not their subjects. Theologians, however, assure us that both may confirm validly : how are we to resolve the antinomy ?

In the earlier history of the sacrament there is no evidence whereby we could decide the question on the score of order or jurisdiction. In the Acts of the Apostles we find that only apostles imposed hands ; but there is nothing to show in virtue of which character—priestly or episcopal—they did this. St. Luke makes one thing certain : deacons have not the power to confirm ; the confirmation of the Samaritans and Ephesians puts this beyond doubt. In early post-apostolic times the ceremony was reserved to bishops, both in East and West ; St. Cyprian and St. Firmilian bear unmistakable witness to this, and the Canons of Hippolytus are no less explicit. The bishop always presided at the solemn ceremonies of initiation ; whereat, though baptism was usually administered by a priest, the bishop always confirmed ; afterwards celebrating Mass, during which communion was given to the initiated for the first time. There is no foundation for the view of Daillé and others, that all priests confirmed in the early Church, and that it was only as a result of encroachment on the presbyteral order the right to impose hands was reserved to the bishop. Quite the contrary.

When, however, the local churches became more

numerous, and dependent churches sprung up outside the episcopal city, we notice a curious divergence between the West and the East. With some rare exceptions, priests were never allowed to confirm in the West ; the evidence for this has been already submitted. It is true that even in the West priests made various attempts to usurp the right of confirming ; but these were generally discountenanced, and were vigorously repressed by the Holy See. Towards the beginning of the fifth century, priests confirmed in Northern Italy ; but Innocent I., while allowing them to perform the vertical unction after baptism, withdrew altogether the right to perform the frontal unction, or to bestow the Holy Ghost. This rule of Innocent exercised remarkable influence throughout the entire West, and was generally inserted in all later treatises on the subject.

Abuses, however, were not entirely eradicated ; for, towards the end of the same century, we find Innocent's successor, Gelasius, repressing in like manner certain priests of Lucania : "*Nec minus etiam presbyteros ultra modum suum tendere prohibemus, nec episcopalis fastigio debita sibimet audacter assumere : non conficiendi chrismatis, non consignationis pontificalis adhibendae sibimet arripere facultatem.*"¹ The abuse may have existed also in Spain and Gaul ; but, if so, it was of short duration and soon disappeared.

The most noted exception, however, to the Western custom occurred in the island of Sardinia, where apparently priests were wont to perform the frontal unction ; a custom which Gregory the Great undertook to suppress. In 593 he wrote to Januarius, Bishop of Cagliari, saying : "*Presbyteri baptizatos infantes signare sacro in fronte chrismate non praesumant ; sed presbyteri baptizatos tangant in pectore, ut episcopi postmodum tangere debeant in fronte.*" This decree, evidently, was received

¹ Migne, P. L., tom. 49, col. 50.

with no great grace by the Sardinians ; for in the following year we find Gregory writing to Januarius, a second time, to make some modifications : “ Pervenit quoque ad nos quosdam scandalizatos fuisse, quod presbyteros chrismate tangere in fronte eos, qui baptizati sunt, prohibuimus. Et nos quidem secundum usum veterum Ecclesiae nostrae fecimus. Sed si omnino hac de re aliqui contristantur, ubi episcopi desunt, ut presbyteri etiam in frontibus baptizatos tangere debeant, concedimus.” ¹ This incident was a subject of much discussion at the Council of Trent, and made the Fathers very cautious in drafting the decree on the minister ; some going so far as to say that Gregory only connived at the practice by pretending to give a dispensation, being obliged to do so by stress of circumstances. The vast majority of the Fathers, however, recognized, and rightly, in the concession an example of genuine papal dispensation ; though they abstained from defining anything on the matter.

It can be seen from this short survey that the administration of confirmation by a priest was regarded as a very exceptional occurrence in the Western Church. But it was far otherwise in the East ; where the exception of the West was the general rule. When dependent Churches were erected in the fourth century, the priests in the East performed the whole initiation ceremonies ; with the limitation that the chrism which was used at confirmation should have been consecrated by a bishop. The Apostolic Constitutions ² lay down that a priest can confirm, but not ordain : *πρεσβύτερος . . . χειροθετεῖ οὐ χειροτονεῖ* ; and Ambrosiaster bears like witness in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians : “ Deinde apud Aegyptum presbyteri consignant ; si praesens non sit episcopus.” ³ The author of the Questions of the Old

¹ Ib. tom. 60, col. 144.

² P^x vii, 28.

³ Migne, P. L., tom. xviii, col. 388.

and the New Testament ¹ almost repeats these words ; and St. Chrysostom and Theophylact say the same, probably,—for there is some controversy about the meaning of these last two writers. Later evidence clearly shows that it was the usual thing for priests to administer confirmation ; and this practice survives in the Orthodox Church to the present day.

Assuming, then, that priests in the East confirmed from the fourth century it would appear that the faculties which they required they received in the ordinary way from their respective bishops, the Holy See allowing this custom without any protest. This is what happens in our own time. Throughout the West on the other hand, the Pope reserved to himself the exclusive right of giving this faculty, and history affords many instances in which the Pope exercised this right.

What, then, does the priest receive by delegation ? It is not a new power of order ; nor, as far as we can ascertain, is it jurisdiction, like that which is required for a valid absolution in the sacrament of penance. The priest, it would seem, confirms in virtue of his priestly character ; but the power which this confers, or contains, can be limited, or even withdrawn by the supreme authority in the Church. How was this effected in the West in the fourth century, while there was no such limitation in the East ?

It is worthy of note that the power which a priest receives to confirm, should be called, by Eugene IV., not delegation, but dispensation : “*per Apostolicæ Sedis dispensationem.*” If it is a dispensation, then it must be a relaxation or withdrawal of some law whereby priests are restrained from confirming validly. Could it be, that the Church may, and does, require something as a necessary condition for the validity of the sacrament ? Possibly ; and if it were required, in the

¹ Ib., tom. xxxv, col. 2302.

West, that the consignation should be performed by one who had the episcopal character ; this condition would be withdrawn whenever the Church gives a simple priest the power to confirm. It is intelligible in this way, that confirmation would be invalid if administered by a priest without such a dispensation or withdrawal of the condition ; though it is valid when administered by a bishop of an heretical sect, or by a bishop of the Catholic Church on those who are not his subjects. There would, moreover, be no need for any extension of the priestly character.

But how account for the Eastern Church ? There are two alternatives : either episcopal consignation was never required as an essential condition ; or, if so, a general dispensation was given to the Eastern priests by the tacit consent of the Holy See. Of course the supreme power would be at liberty to require or to dispense from this condition, according to circumstances.

This explanation is not free from difficulties ; of which one of the greatest is that, apparently, it empowers the Church to condition the valid administration of the sacrament. But if this can be done when the minister is a priest ; why not also when he is a bishop ; especially as both seem to administer this sacrament by the same power of order ? It is, no doubt, possible that Christ has so instituted confirmation that a bishop cannot be restrained from conferring it validly, whereas the Church may condition the power of simple priests.¹ Besides, if it is true that she has power over the matter and form

¹ I find something akin to this in the works of Cardinal Billot : " Sed nota quod commissio Summi Pontificis est necessaria ad ipsam validitatem, et ideo concluditur quod character presbyteralis est de jure divino potestas ad confirmandum, non absolute, sed sub conditione commissionis acceptae ab eo qui in Ecclesia praeest." *De Sac.*, thesis xxxiv. It will be noted, however, that according to Cardinal Billot the condition itself arises directly from the divine law ; while according to the explanation advanced above, it is the power to condition which comes directly from this source.

of this sacrament, why could she not insist on the consecration being episcopal, and so withdraw from priests the power to confirm; just as in matrimony she can insist on conditions which are necessary for the validity of the sacrament, thus depriving the contracting parties of their ordinary power of administering it validly. It is worthy of note, in this connection, that when we have proof of chrism being essential for confirmation, at the same time priests confirmed in the East.

There is a very interesting footnote on this question in the latest edition of Father Lehmkuhl's *Moral Theology*. He is not inclined to invoke the power of order or jurisdiction; according to him, what a simple priest receives when delegated to confer confirmation, is neither an extension of the power of order, nor of jurisdiction, but a dignity of some kind which is akin to order. But, surely, the essential difficulty remains: which is, not whether what a priest receives, when delegated is a mere dignity or something akin to jurisdiction; but how the Church can effectually restrain the power of order whereby priests confirm, when they do confirm—a power which, as far as it goes, is precisely the same in them and in bishops. The Church cannot effectually restrain a priest, any more than a bishop, from using his priestly character to baptise, or to consecrate the Eucharist, or to anoint the sick; how does it appear that she can restrain him from using it to confirm? That is, in case he has power of order to confirm; as he must have if he may confirm by delegation from the Pope.

Dissatisfied, apparently, with Fr. Lehmkuhl's theory; Dölger advanced another; to the effect that any priest whatsoever can confirm validly, in virtue of his presbyteral character, but the Church has restricted this power throughout the West. Two reasons are adduced in support of this: 1. Priests were wont to confirm at an early date in the East without any delegation from the

Holy See ; which proves that the restriction must have been made later, and that the delegation must consist rather in a withdrawal of this restriction than in the bestowal of any positive dignity : 2. If this is not admitted, then the priests in the East would hold, as Fr. Lehmkuhl phrases it, a greater hierarchical grade than their brethren in the West.

Father Lehmkuhl disposes of both reasons in a short paragraph ; distinguishing between express and tacit consent, and contending that it was at all times by tacit consent of the Roman Pontiff priests administered confirmation in the Eastern Church. If this could be proved, it would meet the reasons advanced by Dölger ; but to make the proof more difficult it has to be harmonized with another view of Father Lehmkuhl's—that the power to delegate a simple priest is of itself within the competence of bishops.¹ If so, one would suspect that in the fourth century the Eastern priests did not require even tacit papal delegation ; since there is no reason to think the Pope had at this time deprived the Eastern bishops of the privilege. Besides, one would not expect that Innocent I., Gelasius, and Gregory the Great would sanction a wholesale delegation of the Eastern priests.

Father Lehmkuhl also objects to Dölger's theory on the ground that, if the presbyteral character is by divine law sufficient to administer confirmation, it would be difficult to explain how the Pope could deprive priests of the power to confirm. But is it not as difficult to explain how the Pope can deprive bishops of the faculty of delegation ; which, according to Father Lehmkuhl,

¹ *Melius tamen videntur omnia explicari, si sumatur, hanc presbyteri delegandi facultatem non excedere per se episcopi potestatem ; eam autem natura sua esse Romano Pontifici subjectam ab eoque posse restringi vel sibi ipsi reservari. . . . Similiter, ni fallor, presbyter vi ordinationis suae habet, ut possit jussus ab episcopo tanquam ejus instrumentum confirmationis sacramentum administrare.*" Edit. xi p. 77.

is invested in them by Christ? Could not Dölger reply that Christ invested the Roman Pontiff with the power to restrict the valid administration by a priest; just as he has invested him with the power of restricting the bishop's faculty of delegation. Father Lehmkuhl, moreover, thinks it probable that the Church can withdraw from bishops the power to consecrate chrism, and thus indirectly render their confirmation invalid; but, if so, why may not Christ have enabled her indirectly to invalidate confirmation administered by a simple priest by allowing her to attach further conditions to the exercise of the priestly character?

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

SECTION I.—PRESENT DAY PRACTICE AND TEACHING.

THAT those of our readers who are not conversant with modern practice may understand the situation more clearly, we think it well to set forth the confirmation rite prescribed in the Roman Pontifical—which is that of the Western Church at the present day. It will not be necessary to give the rite in full; for, as we are directly concerned only with the essential matter and form of the sacrament, we may confine ourselves to showing, in the light of history, what these are. Other portions of the rite have a dogmatic aspect, and are interesting in themselves; but they do not come within the scope of our enquiry.

The Pontifical takes for granted that the minister is a bishop; who, after some preparatory prayers, is to proceed thus:—*Tunc extensis versus confirmandos manibus, dicit: Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui regenerare dignatus es hos famulos tuos ex aqua, et Spiritu sancto: quique dedisti eis remissionem omnium peccatorum: emitte in eos septiformem Spiritum tuum sanctum Paraclitum de caelis. R. Amen. Spiritum sapientiae, et intellectus. R. Amen. Spiritum consilii, et fortitudinis. R. Amen. Spiritum sapientiae, et pietatis. R. Amen. Adimple eos Spiritu timoris tui, et consigna eos signo Crucis Christi, in vitam propitiatus aeternam. Per eundem Dominum nostrum*

Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate ejusdem Spiritus sancti Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum. R. Amen. Pontifex . . . stans cum mitra, illos confirmat per ordinem genuflexos, et uno ordine confirmato, illi surgunt, et alii genuflectunt, et confirmantur, et sic usque in finem. Et Pontifex inquit sigillatim de nomine hujuslibet confirmandi, . . . et summitate pollicis dexteræ Chrismate intincta, dicit : N. *Signo te signo Cru⁺cis* : quod dum dicit, producit pollice signum Crucis in frontem illius : deinde prosequitur : *Et confirmo te Chrismate salutis : In nomine Pa⁺tris, et Fi⁺lii, et Spiritus ⁺sancti*. R. Amen.

The rite, as will be observed, consists of two principal parts. The bishop first extends his hands towards the candidates, while reciting a prayer, wherein he invokes the Holy Ghost and the seven gifts, and announces the subsequent consignation. That this portion is to be regarded as a ceremony preceding the essential rite, would appear from the fact that it is followed immediately by directions for the confirmation of the candidates. This constitutes the second part, which the bishop administers by dipping his right thumb in chrism and making the sign of the cross on the forehead ; while pronouncing the form, *Signo te signo crucis*, etc. Such is the Western rite.

In the East it is different ; the preparatory prayer not being accompanied by any extension of the hands, and not containing any mention of the seven gifts. Eastern theologians have never attached much importance to this prayer ; the location of which it is not always easy to determine, as the Orthodox Church still preserves the ancient custom of administering confirmation immediately after baptism. The consignation, moreover, presents some diversity. The forehead, the eyes, the nostrils, the lips, the ears, the breast, and the feet, are anointed with chrism, and the priest says the form :

The seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost. So far for practice.

As the teaching can be found in any handbook of Dogmatic or Moral Theology, we need not linger on it here. It is now admitted by all that the extension of hands over the candidates, with its corresponding prayer, does not belong to the essence of the sacrament.¹ The contrary, as we have seen, was advanced by many seventeenth-century theologians, but is now merely of historical interest; it is mentioned, indeed, but only to be rejected immediately. There were many reasons for its decline; foremost among them being the fact that it was opposed to the almost unanimous tradition of the scholastic theologians. Then again, it could not be harmonized very well with the teaching of Eugene IV. or that of the Council of Trent. The Council, indeed, does not exclude it expressly; but Eugene IV. teaches explicitly that chrism is the matter of the sacrament. Theologians, no doubt, tried to explain this by supposing Eugene to refer to integral, not to essential, matter; but the supposition is not advisable if we consider the tenor of the decree. In the beginning Eugene lays it down that "Omnia sacramenta tribus perficiuntur, videlicet rebus tanquam materia, verbis tanquam forma, . . . quorum si aliquod desit, non perficitur sacramentum."² The different sacraments are then

¹ Father Hurter, however, though not maintaining this theory himself, seems to think it a matter for free discussion; though I am not sure that I interpret him correctly:—"De materia hujus sacramenti quadruplex est sententia, et pro qualibet graves stant patroni. Prima, quam Sirmundus, Is. Habert, etc. tuentur, censet materiam esse solam manuum impositionem, cujus unice in Scriptura fit mentio. —Altera, quae arrisit Thomae, Bellarmino, Maldonato, contendit, solam materiam essentialem esse inunctionem quae substituta fuerit manuum impositioni. . . . Tertia, quam sequitur ex. gr. Ruardus Tapper, statuit et manuum impositionem et inunctionem seorsim materiam esse essentialem.—Quarta sententia contra tuetur manuum impositionem scil. eam, quae habetur in ipsa inunctione seu cum inunctione, materiam esse proximam confirmationis." *Theo. Dogm. Comp.*, Ed. xii, vol. iii, n. 324.

² Denz., *Ench. Symb.*, n. 695.

mentioned; water being assigned as the matter of baptism, chrism of confirmation, bread and wine of the Eucharist; which shows clearly that Eugene did not regard consignation as a mere accidental ceremony. Later official authority, moreover, does not favour this view. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, Benedict XIV.¹ deemed it beyond doubt that the sacrament of confirmation is validly conferred in the Latin Church by consignation with chrism and its form; while, about a century later, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith² declared that, if the extension of the hands should be omitted, there is no need for a conditional repetition of the sacrament.

The essence of confirmation, therefore, is to be found in the second part which we have set forth; that is, in consignation with chrism, accompanied by the indicative form: I sign thee with the sign of the cross, etc. It is taught in all Catholic schools that chrism is the remote matter; and as we are not concerned with the composition of chrism or with the consecration which it requires, we shall pass on to consider the proximate matter, which consists of an unction with the chrism, the oil being applied to the candidate's forehead in the form of a cross. Theologians say, moreover, that this must be done by the thumb; for, as they contend, it must be accompanied by imposition of hands, which is to be found only in the consignation. That there must be an imposition of hands is proved from the New Testament and the Fathers in the usual way.

Sometimes, however, one may notice a wavering as regards this imposition. Suarez³ puts himself the question

¹ Benedict XIV., const. *Ex quo primum*, 1 Mart. 1756.

² *Collectanea S. C. de Prop. Fide*, n. 663.

³ Non omittam hoc loco inquirere, an sit de essentia hujus materiae, quod unctio et consignatio proxime fiat manu et pollice Episcopi, nihil enim de hoc invenio ab authoribus dictum: cum tamen res potest in dubitationem venire, nam posset haec unctio fieri ab episcopo, medio aliquo instrumento, ut penna, aut alio simili: et tunc ex parte

whether the sacrament would be valid if an instrument were used to perform the consignation ; and he is not quite sure ; deeming it probable that imposition of hands is necessary, and that, accordingly, the bishop must perform the unction with his thumb. Some more recent authorities hesitate in the same way ; affirming that imposition is necessary, but not being certain if the employment of an instrument would affect validity. Now if imposition is necessary, there are but two alternatives : Either the use of an instrument would certainly make the sacrament invalid ; or there is an imposition even when an instrument is used. Few, I think, would care to maintain the latter alternative ; so if imposition is necessary, it must be, as the more consistent say, that an instrument would affect the validity of the sacrament. Of this, however, as we have seen, Suarez and others are not sure.

A few words now on the Eastern rite. Western theologians recognise its validity ; as does the Holy See itself, officially. Various attempts have been made to translate the form so as to make it bear the same general meaning as that of the West ; we do not think with much success ; and there are some other peculiarities connected with the teaching and practice of the Orthodox Church which are worthy of note. Eastern scholars make no attempt to find imposition of hands in the rite ; which is due, possibly, to the fact that their theology has been developed independently of controversy with the

*materiae nihil videtur deesse ex his quae ut essentialia ab omnibus ponuntur. . . . In contrarium est quod Pontificale Romanum dicit hanc unctionem debere fieri ipso pollice dexteræ manus chrismate intincto : et hoc videtur in perpetuo in Ecclesia servatum. . . . Respondetur : Non videtur dubium quin hoc fit de necessitate præcepti : quia est res gravis, et ab Ecclesia servata, et prescripta in ritu tradendi hoc sacramentum. Deinde probabile mihi est, esse necessarium et essentielle ut hæc unctio immediate fiat manu seu digito Episcopi, propter ea, quae de manus impositione dicemus statim, dubio subsequenti ; est enim probabile manus impositionem esse aliquo modo de essentia hujus sacramenti.” Cf. *De Confirmatione*, disp. xxxiii, sect. 3, n. 3, *Opera omnia*, t. xx, p. 648.*

Reformers. Moreover, they repeat confirmation in certain cases ; for the character, as they teach, is not indelible, but can be effaced by two sins and two only—heresy and schism. Confirmation is the ordinary rite whereby one is received into the Orthodox Church ; not only from among the Latins and Uniates—if one had been baptised by them,—but even though one had been baptised and confirmed in the Orthodox communion. This is altogether an innovation ; for the Greek Fathers, equally with the Latin, taught that the character of confirmation is indelible ; and antiquity affords no justification for the repetition of confirmation in the case of those who were validly baptised and confirmed in the Greek Church.

SECTION 2.—DEVELOPMENT.

Though the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul was different in many respects from that of the twentieth century, the evidence is more than sufficient to convince any reasonable man that confirmation is now in substance what it was believed to be in apostolic times. There may have been periods, especially in the early ages, when the sacramental nature of the rite was not fully analysed by the Christian consciousness ; for though it was always practised, and though the Fathers apply to it such terms as are applicable to sacraments alone, theory was as yet young, and it remained for later times to assign the rite to its proper place in a doctrinal system. Baptism and confirmation, moreover, were usually administered together in the early Church ; the latter rite being regarded as the complement of the former and as an important part of the initiation ; and though the Fathers distinguish clearly between the different effects of each, they do not engage in any comparative study of the seven sacraments, nor examine their relation to other

rites. The reason is obvious. Their minds were concentrated almost entirely on the defence of Catholic doctrine against the Arian, Nestorian, Pelagian, and Monophysite heresies; and they had, on that account, little time or occasion for the study of the liturgy. The definition of a sacrament was not worked out; sacraments proper were not distinguished from sacramentals; and there was no accurate list of sacraments before the twelfth century. It would be false to conclude from this, as the Reformers did, that the sacraments themselves were a recent growth and a scholastic figment; for these seven rites which we now regard as sacramental, were there from the beginning, in the living practice of the Church; who, mindful of her commission from Jesus Christ, dispensed them day by day to her children, without attempting to synthesize them or ascertain their common features. What the Fathers did for the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas was done for the sacraments by the Schoolmen; who experienced very little difficulty as regards the sacramental nature of confirmation. Side by side with baptism and the Eucharist, this had stood out prominently in antiquity as one of the great ceremonies of Christian initiation; with a precision almost marvellous Tertullian and St. Cyprian had contrasted it with baptism; it had always been included in whatever attempts were made to give a list of the sacraments; and it merely remained for the Schoolmen to include it in the definition of a sacrament which was formulated by them.

But although confirmation was always administered as a sacrament, it may not have been always administered in the same way,—that is, with the same matter and form. Is there any reason to think a development took place in this respect? Before attempting any reply to this question, with which we are mainly concerned in this thesis, we will deal with the more general theological problem of

the power of the Church over the matter and form of sacraments generally.

We have seen already that at the end of the eighteenth century many theologians were of opinion that the matter and form of some sacraments were only generically determined by Christ. Of the moderns, many hold the same view. Cardinal Billot, for instance, writes :—
 “ Sufficit ergo quod divina institutio cadat super constitutiva sacramenti sub ratione generali cujusdam signi symbolici aliunde apti ad certam quamdam significationem sacramentalem, (puta significationem traditionis potestatis sacrae), relicta interim competenti auctoritati electione materiae et formae in individuo. Et sic, cum uniformitate circa id quod divinae institutionis est scilicet circa signum sacramentale formaliter qua sacramentale, poterit haberi quaedam diversitas *mere materialis* quoad elementa quibus constat.” ¹ To illustrate this, in a footnote : “ Let us suppose,” he writes, “ that Christ laid down there should be some sacramental rite of ordination ; and, further, that St. John chose imposition of hands in the East, while St. Peter chose the delivery of instruments in the West ; there would be one and the same sacrament (of order) instituted by Christ in each case. Thus the apostles would have the power of assigning suitable matter ; and, despite material diversity, there would be

¹ *De Eccl. Sac.*, tom. i, p. 35, 36, Romae, 1906 : cfr. also tom. ii, 288, 289, where the Cardinal, treating specially the sacrament of order, writes :—“ Juvabit iterum et iterum in mentem revocare, quomodo ex doctrina catholica quae in Christo Salvatore agnoscit immediatum institutorem sacramentorum Novae Legis, minime sequatur materiam et formam omnium et singulorum debuisse ab ipsomet in individuo assignari. . . . Recte dixeris ipsum nihil determinasse circa constitutiva ritus sacramentalis veluti materialiter considerata, et non attigisse illa nisi sub generali ratione caeremoniae quae convenienter significaret initiationem ad singulas ordinum potestates. Non ideo tamen attribuit quibuslibet hominibus jus determinandi ordinationis ritum, sed soli Ecclesiae cujus sunt sacramenta. . . . Et hoc etiam pacto facile explicantur diversitates inter Graecos et Latinos existentes, necnon et variationes in ipsa latina ecclesia notatas, si verum est quod multi dicunt nullum apparere vestigium porrectionis instrumentorum usque ad saeculum IX.”

formal identity between the two rites." The Cardinal then affirms that what may be true of different parts of the Church at the same time may hold equally of different epochs in the Church's history. Father Hurter ¹ and Father Tanquerey ² both outline views which do not differ substantially from this.

The strongest argument against generic determination is drawn from a statement of the Council of Trent, which seems to declare that the Church cannot change "the substance of the sacraments": "*Praeterea declarat, hanc potestatem perpetuo in Ecclesia fuisse, ut in sacramentorum dispensatione, salva eorum substantia, ea statueret vel mutaret . . . quae magis expedire judicarit.*" ³ Some, who regard the substance of a sacrament as its matter and form, and who at the same time uphold generic determination, would have it that the clause, "*salva eorum substantia,*" is not restrictive of the Church's power over the substance, but merely signifies that the Fathers left that question undecided. The clause would thus mean: For the present we abstract from the question whether the Church has power over the substance. It is pointed out that the Council merely wished to condemn the Protestant error, which had reference to ceremonies alone; but did not intend to define anything about the substance. This is certainly ingenious; but perhaps some may regard it as too ingenious. Nor is that interpretation necessary; for, as Father Tanquerey writes: "As regards matter and form only what Christ instituted is substantial; but if, as we contend, he determined some matter and form in generic fashion only, the substance is not changed by specific determination on the part of the Church, provided it retains the generic signification determined

¹ Op. cit., n. 287.

² *Syn. Theol. Dogm.* (1908), pp. 197 sq.

³ Denz., n. 931.

by Christ.”¹ Thus the substance is confined to what is of divine institution, which is not this or that determinate form of sign,—the matter and form, as they now are,—but some sign of that kind,—which might, possibly, be different from the matter and form as they are at present. The reader will bear in mind that this question has been raised principally with regard to order and confirmation: in the case of baptism and the Eucharist the matter and form were specifically determined by Christ.

It is different with regard to confirmation, the matter and form of which, there is reason to believe, were only generically determined by Christ. For, in the first place, the apostles confirmed by imposition of hands; as did their successors down at least to the third century, as we know from Tertullian and Cyprian, who make it clear that the full hand was imposed, as in ordination. Many theologians, no doubt, find an imposition of hands in the rite whereby the bishop, using his thumb, signs the forehead with chrism; but really, it is difficult to call this a true imposition of hands. That it is not the imposition which we find in the New Testament may be seen by comparing the texts that refer to confirmation with those that refer to ordination.² In ordination the full hand was imposed; as it was in the reconciliation ceremony, which all regard as identical with the ceremony of confirmation in the early Church. Then no one would find an imposition of hands in extreme unction, though the priest is directed to dip his thumb in the oil and anoint the eyes, ears, and sometimes even the forehead. Imposition in consignation is a makeshift theory, necessitated by refusal to allow the Church power over the matter and form, and difficult, if not

¹ Tanqueray, l. c.

² Compare Acts, viii, 18, xix, 6, Hebs. vi, 2, with Acts, xiii, 3, 1 Tim. iv, 8, v, 22, 2 Tim. i, 6.

impossible, to reconcile with facts. It reminds one of the seventeenth century doctrine that found imposition of hands in the delivery of instruments at the ordination of priests.¹

But whatever may be the propriety of calling consecration an imposition, it is a different question whether the chrism must be applied by the thumb, so that the use of an instrument would invalidate the sacrament. Some theologians, as we have seen, have doubted this ; and we think that if it is necessary, this arises from the fact that the Church insists on the thumb being used, and not, as is generally said, because the signing is identical with the imposition whereby the apostles confirmed. That the Church does insist on the thumb being employed there can be no doubt ; but whether she makes this a condition for validity, cannot be definitely decided, as she has never given a final decision on the matter. The minister, however, should be careful, as a matter of prudence, to observe this condition strictly.

Chrism, as we saw, occupied a prominent place in confirmation towards the second half of the fourth century ; appearing, moreover, to have completely supplanted imposition of hands in the East. Imposition, however, continued in the West ; many later writers still speaking of it as essential. Nevertheless, it was gradually diminishing in importance, until it became a mere extension of hands over the candidates ; when

¹ Cardinal De Lugo, *De sac. in genere*, Disp. II., sect. v, n. 92, refers to this theory, but rejects it :—" Aliqui enim dicunt, apud Latinos sacerdotem ordinari etiam per manus impositionem ; quia ipsa traditio instrumentorum cum pane et vino est quaedam impositio manuum, cum in illo actu episcopus, ut tradat calicem et patenam, extendat manus, et quodammodo eas imponat ; per illam traditionem episcopus mediate conjungit manus suas cum ordinando per conjunctionem physicam ; quod enim mediet calix et paterna, non tollit verum contactum, sicut etiam apud Graecos mediat pallium, et tamen dicitur vera manus impositio. Haec solutio numquam potuit mihi satisfacere."

we notice two tendencies among writers, one to regard this extension as essential, another to regard consignation as imposition. Then came the schoolmen, who made both impositions accidental, and regarded consignation alone as the essential matter. This was endorsed by Eugene IV.; and though not explicitly defined by the Council of Trent, was the current teaching at the time. Controversy with the Reformers produced a reaction; some theologians finding the matter in the extension of hands, others in the consignation and the imposition therein. The former theory has disappeared: the latter is still with us.

A few words on the form remain. There can be no doubt that, as consignation with chrism is the essential matter, the words *Signo te signo crucis*, etc., which accompany it, are the essential form; though this was not in general use before the twelfth century. We have already seen the evidence of the first four centuries, and the difficulties which it presents to the theory of specific determination. This, however, is not all; for St. Augustine understands the gift of the Holy Ghost to be conveyed by prayer, and the early medieval writers attach supreme importance to the deprecativ form, which corresponds with the modern prayer accompanying the extension of the hands. In the *Sacramentaries* and *Ordines* which date from the eighth to the tenth century, we find the most diverse forms accompanying the unction; whereas the preceding prayer is invariably the same. In the eighth century there were some very indefinite unction forms; which grow more definite as we approach the twelfth century, when the present form came into general use.¹ On historical evidence it would appear that, for the first eight centuries, the

¹ Alexander of Hales, however, may be cited to show that, even in his time, the present form was not universal:—"Hujus sacramenti secundum consuetudines diversarum ecclesiarum diversae sunt formae."

form in the Latin Church was deprecativè, and that, from the fourth to the eighth century, this corresponded, not only with imposition, but with unction ; the present indicative form being a later growth which, beginning with the phrase, *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*, gradually assumed its present shape. It may be mentioned also that many of the unction forms are such that no ingenuity could extract from them the meaning which is required as essential in the Church to-day.

If, therefore, the essential form is indicative, it is difficult to explain the facts without allowing the Church power to determine the form. How otherwise explain the language of the primitive Church, which connects the gift of the Holy Ghost with prayer ? how account for the silence, not only of the primitive Church, but even of the first eight centuries about our present form ? and how account for the diversity of forms from the seventh to the eleventh century ? There must have been a great, though silent, development. In the seventh century we find a simple invocation of the Trinity, accompanying the consignation ; later, we meet with the word *signum*, or sometimes *signo* ; and, later still, we find the word *confirmo* ; all of which are to be found in the present form. We must remember, however, that close to the rise of the Schoolmen, Western theologians continued to attach importance to the prayer which preceded the consignation ; without which they did not regard the unction form as of much value. Of course it is not impossible that the *disciplina arcani*,—which is sometimes invoked,—may have played some part in suppressing the writing of the form ; but this explanation can scarcely be made to serve. Was the discipline in force when the Sacramentaries and Ordines were composed ? And is it not strange that they should give every particular of the rite except the present unction form ?

This discipline of the secret, moreover, does not account for the language of the early Church and of the early medieval writers, which connects the effect of the sacrament with the prayer ; nor does it account for the diversity of the Latin unction forms in the early middle ages, nor for the diversity between the forms in the Greek and Latin Churches.

To sum up. With St. Thomas and all the moderns we hold that the essence of confirmation consists in consignation with chrism and the indicative form ; with the moderns, however, and against St. Thomas, we hold that imposition of hands was matter in apostolic times ; while with St. Thomas, but against the moderns, we think that consignation has been substituted for the apostolic imposition. All the arguments given to prove that there is imposition in consignation are based on the idea that the Church has no power over the matter and form. This, we think, is a mistake ; for, as we have seen, "*manum imponere*" does not naturally signify a signing of the forehead with the thumb, but an action similar to that which takes place in ordination, when the bishop lays the full hand on the head of each candidate. This, moreover, was the meaning of imposition in all the ceremonies of the early Church. We grant, indeed, that there is some support in the later tradition for those who find imposition in the consignation ; but it should be borne in mind that there are, as it were, four strata in the tradition of the Western Church on this matter. These were, roughly speaking, the first eight centuries, during which the imposition was altogether distinct from the unction ; then the next three centuries, when for the first time some writers seemed to find an imposition in consignation, others regarding the full imposition as still essential ; thirdly, there was the Scholastic period, when both impositions were not deemed important and when it was taught that chrism had been substituted for

imposition of hands ; and last, the modern period, when some, at the beginning, held that there is imposition in the extension of the hands, and taught that this is the essential matter ; while the majority, wishing to retain imposition of hands, as apostolic, and convinced that the consignation, not the extension of hands, is essential, found, as those of the second period, a sufficient imposition in the consignation.

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